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ABSTRACT

This document consists of four issues of the quarterly report "Alaska's Children," which provides information on the Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project and updates on Head Start activities in Alaska. Regular features in the issues include a calendar of conferences and meetings, a status report on Alaska's children, reports from the Alaska Children's Trust, and "Collaboration Briefings," updates on the collaboration project activities. The Winter 1999 issue focuses on the impact of Head Start in Alaska, program quality, and Head Start investments; and describes how various programs have used the Head Start Performance Standards to develop promising practices. The Spring 1999 issue discusses early child development and the importance of quality care and learning programs to enhance brain growth and development. The September 1999 issue focuses on transitions to the public school at kindergarten and the importance of quality early childhood programs to prepare children for school; this issue also includes an article on the 2000 census. (KB)

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Alaska's Children, 1999.

Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project, Quarterly Report

Dorothy Douglas, Editor

Winter—September 1999

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Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project

Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs • Quarterly Report • Winter 1999

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Alaska's Children

Head Start in Alaska

An Investment in the Future

February — the month when wage earners across the nation are collecting receipts, filling out forms — getting ready to file their income taxes. Individuals will be reviewing how much of their income was spent on housing, food, medical care, utilities, and other essential cost-of-living expenses. Wage earners who are fortunate enough to have an income that exceeds expenses, even after taxes have been paid, will be looking for ways to invest money for future needs. For some people, investing in the future is as important as paying for living expenses today.

February is also the month that government budget analysts, policy makers and elected officials are analyzing their state's revenue sources, expenses, savings accounts and investments for future well-being. In Alaska, questions about the state's budget has reached a critical stage. For the last 20 years, Alaska has enjoyed huge incomes from oil revenues that exceeded state expenses. So much so, that large amounts have been invested in savings accounts. Our savings investments have been so successful that the state currently has over 3 billion dollars in a Constitutional Budget Reserve Fund and over

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Project Director–Marilyn Webb; Newsletter Editor–Dorothy Douglas

Head Start in AK, *continued*

20 billion dollars in a Permanent Fund Account. The Permanent Fund Account was created as a way to share the state's oil wealth with every Alaska resident by giving them a yearly dividend. In 1997, each resident received a Permanent Fund Dividend of over $1,500. But, Alaska's budget picture has begun to change. Income from oil revenues, our principal source of state revenues, has fallen as the price of oil has dropped to the lowest point in two decades. Our state expenses are now much greater than our state income. Debates are flaring up all over the state about the best way to balance the budget so that our spending plan equals our income. Ideas that are being debated include: developing other income sources, cutting state expenses by eliminating or scaling back programs and services, spending funds from savings accounts, or bringing back the state personal income tax that was eliminated in 1974. Most of these debates have been about money - how much to spend, how much to save.

But any prudent budget plan must also include a debate about what kinds of things we are going to invest our money in today, so that we can meet our needs in the future. These are essential investments like quality education programs so students can become wage earners tomorrow, health and medical services so children can grow into healthy adults, or social and emotional supports for families so they can nurture their children. And just like any prudent investor, we want to be able to measure the performance of these essential investments. If we invest money in a program or plan today, will it produce the results we want years from now?

Measuring Performance

There are lots of ways to invest money and measure the performance of that investment. An investor can put money in a tin can and bury it in the back yard. In ten years, they can expect to dig it up and find exactly the same amount that was buried. Money can be invested in a savings account at a bank and accumulate around 4% interest with relatively no risk. Investing in moderate risk mutual funds have been averaging 6% to 8% gains. Investing in stocks and bonds can average gains of 10% or more over a period of time, but investors have to be willing to take risks in order to get that rate of return. Whatever method or plan is chosen, investors will judge the success of their investment based on performance over time and the risks involved in achieving a reasonable rate of return.

Other types of investments have less clear-cut ways of measuring performance. Investing in a healthy life style can prevent illness, or insisting children complete homework before watching TV can help with later job and educational opportunities. Investing in programs that promote child health and development can help them be more successful in the future. But; when faced with hard budget questions, some people may be reluctant to invest money in programs when gains may not be realized for long periods of time, or because program success has not been clearly demonstrated.

Head Start has been one of the programs that faces challenges when national and state budgets are being planned. Measuring the performance of Head Start, and other early childhood programs, is not as easy as figuring out how much interest income can be earned from a savings account.

Measuring Head Start's Performance

Head Start was founded over 35 years ago as a program to help children from low income families prepare for public school and later learning in life. To be successful, Head Start has had to take into consideration all of the parts of a child's life that contribute to success: physical well being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language usage and emerging literacy, and cognitive development. In addition, the fact that children cannot be isolated from their families and communities meant that Head Start programs had to include needed supports for families like education and training to support parenting skills and obtain meaningful employment; assistance with housing, health care and other supports that are essential for overcoming the risks of poverty. To be successful in all of these domains, Head Start also had to have a program design and management structure that would maintain trained staff and high quality programs. Measuring Head Start's performance presents a complicated framework that: must consider the comprehensive approach to child development, be able to demonstrate the year to year progress children and families make, provide some predictors about the long-term gains children and families can achieve, and measure the quality and performance of each program in achieving these goals.

Despite these challenges, Head Start has made dramatic progress in measuring program performance and demonstrating positive outcomes for children and their families. On-going program performance requirements have evolved into the Head Start Program Performance Measures Initiative, which measures the effectiveness and quality of programs across the nation. This initiative is based on the ultimate goal of Head Start, the objectives that are critical for achieving the goal, and a system of measuring the performance of Head Start programs in achieving these objectives. An illustration of this initiative looks something like a pyramid (see Figure I). **The top of the pyramid shows the goal of Head Start which is to promote the social competence of children. Social competence is the child's everyday effectiveness in dealing with his or her present environment and later responsibilities in school. An important life challenge and key test of the child's social competence at this stage is whether he or she has acquired the skills, understandings, and behaviors that help insure successful functioning, what is often call school readiness.** The five objectives supporting this goal at the top of the pyramid are the key cornerstones of the Head Start program. Each of these objectives is critical to helping children of low-income families attain their full potential. These objectives are:

1. Enhance children's healthy growth and development
2. Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
3. Provide children with educational, health and nutritional services
4. Link children and families to needed community services
5. Ensure well-managed programs that involve parents in decision making.

Each of these objectives has Program Performance Measures and "Performance Indicators" that specify how the measure will be assessed. For example, the objective "Enhance children's healthy growth and development," includes the Performance Measure "Head Start Children demonstrate improved emergent literacy, numeracy, and language skills." The Performance Indicator for this measure is the change in the Head Start children's emergent literacy, numeracy and language skills over the Head Start year, measured by child assessments, and parent and teacher reports of the child's abilities.

In 1998, Head Start issued the first data results for the Performance Measures Initiative. The data is drawn from the "Family and Child Experiences Survey" (FACES), a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs, classrooms, teachers, parents and children that examines the quality and effects of Head Start. The first year of the FACES survey involved approximately 2,400 parents and children in 40 Head Start programs. The

FACES survey will continue with periodic, longitudinal data collection about children as they enter Head Start, during Head Start, at school entry and after a year of kindergarten. The full study will follow 3200 children and their families from across the nation.

The data shows the following key findings about Head Start:

- Head Start children are ready for school
- Head Start families are involved in their child's education and development despite significant challenges
- Program quality is linked to child performance
- Head Start classroom quality is good.

Head Start Children Are Ready For School:

- The first phase of the FACES research found the typical child completing Head Start had developed knowledge and skills in early literacy and numeracy as well as skills that signify a readiness to learn more in kindergarten.
- Head Start four year olds perform above the levels expected for children from low-income families who have not attended centered-based programs. Head Start children score 4 to 8 points higher than their peers who had no preschool experience. While this difference may seem relatively modest, it does fall within the range that has been deemed "educationally meaningful."

Head Start Families are Involved, Despite Challenges:

- The majority of Head Start families are highly representative of the working poor in the United States. They face the typical challenges families with very limited resources and opportunities experience.
- A significant minority of Head Start parents and children are facing major challenges in their lives: 54 percent of the families had no father present in the household, 8 percent had more than 5 children, the primary caregiver had less than a high school education in 29 percent of the families, 12 percent had incomes of less than $500 per month, nearly 8 percent had been homeless at some point since the child's birth, and about 4 percent of the children had been victims of crime or domestic violence.
- Almost a quarter of parents speak a primary language other than English.
- Despite these challenges, Head Start parents maintain involvement with their children both at home and through the program. At least 66 percent read to their children three or more times a week, 70 to 90 percent taught their children letters, numbers, or songs. Over 90 percent involve their children in chores or errands, played with them, and talked with their children about Head Start.
- Almost 90 percent of the parents were very satisfied with the Head Start services they received, with more than 90 percent reporting that they felt welcome and supported by the teacher and that their children were respected by the teacher. Between 85 to 90 percent of the parents were very satisfied with the safety of the program, services for children, and Head Start's promotion of child growth and development.
- Most Head Start parents have participated at least once in a Head Start activity during the year, despite reported barriers such as work or school schedules, child care needs, or lack of transportation.
- Parents less likely to participate include single parents, parents who had not graduated from high school, and employed parents. But participation was equal across English speaking and non-English speaking families.

Program Quality is Linked to Child Performance:

- Children scored higher on assessment measures when they had sensitive teachers who encouraged independence. Children also scored higher if their classrooms had a varied and appropriate daily schedule, when they experienced richer teacher/child interaction and more individual attention; were provided richer language learning opportunities and had a classroom well equipped with learning resources.
- Children who attended two years of Head Start performed better than children attending only one year.

Head Start Classroom Quality Is Good:

- The quality of most Head Start classrooms is good. Of the 403 classrooms observed, the overall average Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) score was in the "good" range with 17 percent rated as good to excellent, and no classrooms scoring below the minimal quality rating. The lowest quality Head Start classrooms were still higher than many commercial preschools and day care centers. No classrooms were given less than a "minimal" rating of 3 of a possible 7

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Figure 1

CHILD'S SOCIAL COMPETENCE
1 ENHANCE children's growth and development
2 STRENGTHEN families as the primary nurturers of their children
3 PROVIDE Children with educational, health and nutritional services
4 LINK children and families to needed community services
5 ENSURE well-managed programs that involve parents in decision-making

Head Start in AK, *continued*

points.

- Head Start classrooms received high scores for: provisions and planning for children with disabilities, good supervision of children's outdoor activities, high levels of parent involvement; a "calm but busy" classroom atmosphere; and a balanced schedule of classroom activities.
- Over 75 percent of Head Start lead teachers report some college experience or a college degree.

In the coming year, the availability of additional data from several sources will greatly enhance Head Start's ability to assess the quality of its programs and its effects on children and families. The next FACES report in 1999, will provide the most comprehensive measure of the progress Head Start children make on the largest sample in 35 years. In addition to child development, the study will also provide information on the changes in family experiences and behaviors over the year, and evaluate the quality of Head Start classrooms, teachers, and programs. The additional information will enable Head Start to objectively review its program performance, strategically plan for future investments, and respond to identified program needs to better serve low-income families with young children.

All Head Start grantees are making Program Performance Measures an important part of their program design and management structure. Measuring performance provides an important opportunity for each Head Start center to improve and maintain program quality, identify areas for improvement, and provide the full range of comprehensive services for children and families. It also provides needed information for states who are considering what kinds of investments and savings plans they want for the future.

Head Start's Investment Portfolio

Drawing from the data generated by the FACES survey and other longitudinal studies like the High Scope/Perry Preschool Project, it is possible to develop a Head Start Portfolio that investors could use to determine the program's history and stability, what type of short and long-term gains they can expect, what type of risks are involved, and what kinds of savings might be predicted. The portfolio might look like this:

Head Start History and Stability

- Head Start is a nationwide program that has been in operation for over 35 years. The first Alaska Head Start program was established in 1968.
- Programs are currently located in all 50 states and its U.S. territories. Alaska Head Start programs are currently located in 94 communities
- Since it began operation, Head Start has served over 14 million children and their families. Alaska programs currently serve 3,232 children.
- Head Start is one of the most successful programs for children who may be at risk due to poverty, disabilities or lack of available quality services in their communities. It is one of the only War-on-Poverty programs still receiving federal and state funding.
- The program has been shown to be a low risk investment, and in some cases can even reduce certain risk factors associated with poverty.

Short-term Gains

- Children enrolled in Head Start score 6 to 8 points higher on cognitive assessments than children not enrolled in preschools. These gains are as good as investing in moderate risk mutual funds in today's stock market.
- Head Start graduates enter kindergarten ready for school.
- Head Start parents have higher rates of involvement in their child's education, health care and home activities than parents in most public schools.
- Children receive health, nutrition, dental, social and emotional screenings/assessments, immunizations, and follow-up treatment to prevent more serious childhood illnesses.

Long-term Gains

- Longitudinal studies show that adults who attended comprehensive preschool programs for children from low-income families had higher rates of high school graduation, meaningful employment, successful marriages, and improved health. These adults also had lower rates of juvenile and adult crimes, public assistance costs, teen pregnancies, and behavioral risk factors.
- Parents and families show increased understanding of child development and a stronger capacity to nurture and support their children during the critical early childhood development years.
- Communities show benefits from salaries paid to program staff, local purchase of supplies, facilities rentals or purchases. Program training and education programs are shared with other community resources.

Avoidness Costs

- Investing in Head Start can save future costs of special or remedial public education programs, health care, public assistance, and adult training/education.
- High costs associated with juvenile and adult crime can be reduced. These costs include judicial and correctional systems, victim costs such as injury, loss of life, emotional well-being and property loss.
- The emotional and financial costs of child welfare investigations, foster care placements, family preservation programs, and crises care can be reduced.

Quality of Services Provided to Participants

- Staff are well-trained and knowledgeable about child development needs.
- Facilities used by programs meet all required state and federal health and safety regulations.
- Programs and services must meet mandatory Head Start Performance Standards and Performance Measures; and are evaluated on a regular basis by both state and federal review teams.
- Families are very satisfied with the type of services they receive.

Investment Rating

Head Start has a proven record of comprehensive services for low income children and families who face predictable challenges in their daily lives. Recent data suggests that the program has significant short and long term gains, and that for every dollar invested, over five dollars can be saved in future service costs. Total program costs per child/family is approximately $6,500, which is below the average cost of similar comprehensive programs for children. Currently Head Start serves only 22% of the children that are eligible for the program in Alaska.

Based on performance over time, continued investments in Head Start will yield low-risk, significant gains.

Information Sources: Head Start Program Performance Measures, Second Progress Report. June 1998. Research, Demonstration and Evaluation Branch and the Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children and Families. Alaska Permanent Fund Budget Analysts, State of Alaska. Office of Management and Budget, State of Alaska.

Making a Difference in Alaska through Promising Practices

Over the years, a major strength of the Head Start Performance Standards has been their flexibility and recognition that each Head Start program in each community is unique. The Standards encourage each local program to use a variety of approaches that will meet the individual needs of their children, families and communities.

Head Start programs in Alaska serve diverse and culturally rich populations. Each Head Start program offers unique challenges and opportunities, from the largest programs in urban areas to the smallest ones in isolated villages. Alaska Head Start programs take into consideration, not only cultural and geographic differences, but the supports, services, and needs present in each community. In many instances, meeting the mandatory requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards while honoring the unique characteristics of each family and community, has presented challenges for Alaska Head Start programs. But in characteristic Alaskan style, these challenges have been turned into innovative promising practices that are worthy of recognition both on a state and national level.

Following are examples of the ways Alaska Head Start Programs have used the Performance Standards to develop promising practices for Alaska's children and families.

Community Legacies—Tanana Chiefs Head Start

Head Start Performance Standards 1304.21 *". . . provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition."*

Tanana Chiefs Head Start has developed a curriculum for their Head Start programs designed to support and pass the legacy of traditional culture to their Head Start children. For pre-school children, culture is what is happening around them. A child's culture is made up of:

- traditional things from the past that elders do
- traditional things that are being done in new ways with new technologies and,
- new things that people have incorporated into village life.

The Community Legacies curriculum supports children to grow up strong, feeling good about their community background and proud of the people around them from the oldest elder to the youngest Mom or Dad. The curriculum is designed to be an on-going process, building activities in four main areas: winter, summer, celebrating the arts and child care. Parents and staff develop activities and make materials for each Head Start site or for individual families in home-based programs. As activities are planned, parent groups, Policy Council members and staff add new ideas so the ideas keep growing. Some communities have found ways to incorporate local languages into the curriculum as well. Each community group comes up with their own ways of using and adding to the curriculum. Some of the activities that have been developed are: Celebrating the Arts - making music, beads and quilts, baskets, dance, story makers; Winter - transportation, ice fishing, skies and weather, basketball; Child care - wellness, prenatal care, growing up, health and safety; Summer - plant foods and berries, river travel, sports, fire fighting, fish camp.

Tanana Chiefs Head Start serves children prenatal through age four, in Holy Cross, Huslia, Kaltag, Koyukuk, McGrath, Nulato, and Ruby, Alaska. Head Start services are provided through both home-visitor and center-based programs.

Apprentice Teacher Program — Kids' Corps, Inc.

Head Start Standard 1304.52 (b). Staff qualifications . . *"Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that staff and consultants have the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to perform their assigned functions responsibly. . . In addition, grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that only candidates with the qualifications specified in this part and in 45 CFR 1306.21 are hired."*

Many Head Start programs are having problems meeting the requirements of this Head Start Performance Standard, including the Kids' Corps program in Anchorage. Kids' Corps began experiencing problems in recruiting qualified teachers two years ago in the Anchorage area. Recruitment efforts would result in only 1 or 2 qualified applicants for 3 or 4 open teacher positions. It soon became apparent that a new approach was going to be necessary to recruit and maintain qualified teachers to work in their Head Start classrooms. The creative approach taken by Kids' Corps was to develop an Apprentice Teacher position in 1997. Apprentice teachers are hired who are high school graduates with 24 months of experience working with preschool children. They are paired with qualified teachers in a co-teaching situation. Apprentice teachers receive on the job training and assistance with completion of their CDA within 12 months of their date of hire. The first apprentice teachers were hired through in-house recruitment efforts. They successfully completed their CDA and other job requirements within the first 6 months of their position change. In the following year, 4 more apprentice teachers completed their CDA and several others are at various stages of completion. One unexpected benefit of the program is that Head Start parents find it less intimidating to apply for a teaching position. With the obvious success of this program, Kids' Corps is working out the details for beginning an apprentice bus driver program. If this proves to also be successful, they may expand the program into other work areas. It seems that the best response to the current shortage in qualified applicants for Head Start programs is to provide in-house training and career advancement.

Kids' Corps Head Start provides comprehensive services to children birth through age four in the Anchorage area. Services are provided through center-based and home-visitor programs.

Public School, Head Start Collaboration — Upper Tanana Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.41 *. . ." establish and maintain procedures to support successful transitions for enrolled children and families from Head Start into elementary school, and . . . outreach to encourage communication between Head Start staff and their counterparts in the schools and other settings..."*

The Upper Tanana Head Start Program has established a collaborative relationship with local schools that provides long lasting benefits for both Head Start children and their families. The Eagle and Northway Head Start programs, who operate home-visitor programs, use the local school facilities for group social experiences. In Eagle, the children have use of

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Promising Practices. *continued*

the gym which provides an excellent opportunity for children to develop gross motor skills. At both sites, there is strong school and community support for Head Start. Providing adequate space for group socials is considered a high priority. Head Start is recognized in both communities as the provider of comprehensive early childhood services. Use of school rooms for group socials provides a "natural" transition for Head Start children into the program and then on to the "big school." There is also positive interaction with other children and adults in the school who often drop by to help out and visit with the children. This serves to increase general knowledge and support of Head Start and its importance to the children and families of the communities. In these communities where needed services are limited, the use of school space helps Head Start to provide services to more children. Classroom space that meets Head Start health and safety standards is sometimes hard to find, so the use of school space helps to meet that need as well as provide other benefits.

Upper Tanana Head Start serves children birth through age four, through home-visitor and center-based programs in Eagle, Northway, and Tok, Alaska.

Linking our Voices, Parents as Partners — RurAL CAP Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.50 . . *"Grantee and delegate agencies must establish and maintain a formal structure of shared governance through which parents can participate in policy making or in other decisions about the program . . . "*

RurAL CAP Head Start Programs have developed a comprehensive training program to help parents become familiar with Head Start program management and decision making processes, and to act as advocates and mentors for other parents in their community. One parent from each community is selected to participate in a Regional Parent Committee. This committee is brought together for a two-day training in their region. The training provides information on : 1) how Congress authorizes the Head Start program and determines funding; 2) what federal regulations guide the program; 3) how Outcome Measures are used to determine program effectiveness; 4) the roles and responsibilities the local Parent Committee, Policy Council and Board of Directors; 5) how to facilitate and participate in a meeting; and 6) how grants are written. Each parent actually writes a mini-grant to fund a family activity which requires them to follow the steps found in most funding applications. These trainings are followed up with periodic meetings, where parents use these skills to participate in program decisions. The training is provided to one parent from each of the communities RurAL CAP serves. These parents are asked to take back the information to their local communities and share it with other parents on the local Head Start committee. The first group of parents who completed this training have just completed their first terms as Regional Parent Committee Representatives and Child Development Policy Council members. During their terms, they were able to make significant contributions to directing a large program, and reported increased skills and confidence in participating in decision making groups. They have learned how to advocate for their children and do so. Parents who just received the training are highly motivated to participate in their child's education and are looking forward to using the new skills they have gained in upcoming meetings. They left the training eager to use the information gained in their local communities with their Parent Committees.

RurAL CAP Head Start serves children birth through age four, at Alakanuk, Chevak, Emmonak, Haines, Homer, Hooper Bay, Hydaburg, Kake, Ketchikan, Copper Center, Kodiak, Kwethluk, Marshall, Mountain Village, Napaskiak, Noorvik, Savoonga, Selawik, Seward, Stebbins, Toksook Bay, and Unalakleet, Alaska.

Parent/Guardian Involvement Project — Metlakatla Indian Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40 . . *" A variety of opportunities must be created by grantee and delegate agencies for interaction with parents throughout the year. Meetings and interactions with families must be respectful of each family's diversity and cultural and ethnic background."*

The Metlakatla Head Start Program serves families who live on an island in Southeast Alaska where weather can sometimes create a feeling of isolation. They have developed a series of activities that adults can do with children and with other families in the community. Each staff member is responsible for planning and hosting activities for Head Start families. The activities vary from parent brunches to evening activities where families create hats, cookies or share traditional native foods at a potluck. During the months of September/October, 1998, nine separate activities were sponsored by the Metlakatla Head Start program.

Metlakatla Indian Head Start serves children age 3 and 4 through a center-based program in Metlakatla, Alaska.

Head Start Video Newsletters — Association of Village Council Presidents Head Start.

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40 . . . *"grantee and delegate agencies must provide parent involvement and education activities that are responsive to the ongoing and expressed needs of the parents, both as individuals and as members of a group. . "*

The AVCP Head Start Program felt that parents were not reading the program newsletter and were not getting important program and educational information. During the 1998 program year, they decided to produce video newsletters. Video newsletters were produced showing what the AVCP program looks like and including information on a specific topic. The first video newsletter was about literacy, the second one was about nutrition. Copies of the video newsletters were sent to each program with the idea that each site would hold a parent meeting and show the video. The video would then be sent home with those parents who were unable to attend the parent meeting. At the end of the year, AVCP conducted to survey to ask parents if they preferred a written or video newsletter. There were mixed reactions, so this year two additional video newsletters will be produced along with a quarterly written newsletter from the central office and monthly mini-newsletters produced at each site.

The Association of Village Council Presidents Head Start serves children ages 3 through 4, in Akiachak, Bethel, Kalskag, Kasigluk, Kotlik, Pilot Station, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Tuluksak, Alaska. Services are provided through both center-based and home-visitor programs.

Dental Health — Kawerak Head Start Program

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.20 . . *"obtain from a health care professional a determination as to whether the child is up-to-date on a schedule of age appropriate preventive and primary health care which includes medical, dental and mental health. . . .dental follow up must include: fluoride supplements and treatments as recommended by dental professionals and other necessary preventive measures and further dental treatment by the dental professional. . ."*

Meeting the mandatory requirements for

dental screenings and follow-up treatment has always been a challenge for Head Start programs in smaller communities and villages. There are very high rates of dental decay in Alaska and in many rural areas dental care is only available from itinerant dental health professionals. To meet this challenge, Alaska Head Start developed a comprehensive dental wellness program that was piloted in several Head Start programs. Kawerak Head Start is one of the programs that has had continued success with the dental health program. Dental advocates are hired and trained to complete home visits with Head Start families prior to dental screenings and treatment. Families are signed up for Medicaid, if eligible, and those families with insurance complete forms for third party payment to dentists. Adults and children participate in a dental health education program and concerns or questions are dealt with before dental visits. Pediatric dental teams are arranged for and they visit six Kawerak villages as well as Head Start programs administered by RurAL CAP. All Head Start children in the villages of St. Michael, Elim, Koyuk, Gambell, Brevig Mission, Shishmaref, Savoonga and Stebbins receive dental exams and treatment. The dental team also examines and treats other children under the age of six who are not enrolled in Head Start. Children who have serious dental problems may be required to travel to Nome or Anchorage for longer-term or more extensive treatment. Children who have participated in the dental wellness program for several years experience fewer cavities and healthier teeth. Without the Head Start program, many young children would not be seen by the regular itinerant dentist because of the needs of older children and adults in these villages.

Kawerak Head Start serves children ages 3 through 4 in Nome, Brevig Mission Diomede, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, St Michael, Teller, Wales, and White Mountain, Alaska. Services are provided through shared programs with the public school districts.

Family/Child Care/Employer Partnerships — Chugiak Children's Services.

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40(a) . . *"grantee and delegate agencies must offer parents opportunities to develop and implement individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving them." 1304(b) . .(and offer) "opportunities for continuing education and employment training and other employment services through formal and informal networks in the community."*

Chugiak Children's Services (CCS) Head Start serves as a model for services that have been developed to implement this important standard. CCS has developed a comprehensive partnership with other community programs that provides quality child care and support to parents as they return to the work force. Members of this partnership include: Head Start, the Alaska Employment Service, Division of Public Assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Municipality of Anchorage, JTPA Program, Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, Child Care Connection, Palmer Senior Center Older Workers Program and Joy Child and Family Development Center. Head Start families are referred to the Child Development Center by the Division of Public Assistance and the Alaska Employment Service. The Center is open from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm to accommodate the schedules of working parents. Five Head Start families are currently enrolled at the Center and in turn the Center provides a teacher at the Eagle River Head Start site. Five "drop-in" child care positions are reserved for children ages 3-5 whose parents are receiving training, or taking tests at the Alaska Employment Service. Head Start provides training for staff at the Center and awareness of child care issues that affect workers and the impact these issues have on businesses. Families at the Center receive child development services, as well as support through the Family Support Assistants who help families achieve the goals developed for their Family Partnership Agreement for Head Start and Alaska Temporary Assistance Plan.

Chugiak Children's Services Head Start serves children ages 6 weeks through 5 in Chugiak, Palmer, Wasilla, and Big/Lake Houston, Alaska. Services are provided through center-based, home-visitor, and collaborative programs with other community partners.

Comprehensive Services = Individual Gains — Chugachmuit Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21 . . *"provide for the development of cognitive skills by encouraging each child to organize*

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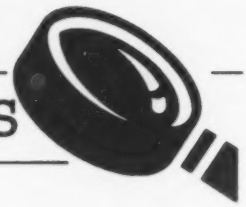
Calendar of Events



February 15-19 Juneau, AK	*Alaska Head Start Association Meeting and Training*	
March 9 & 10 Homer, AK **March 23 &24** Juneau, AK **April 14&15** Anchorage, AK **April 29&30** Fairbanks, AK	*Training of Presenters and Promoters for Building Assets in Alaska's Youth*	Derek Peterson (907) 586-1083 peterson@ptialaska.net
March 10-12 Portland, OR	*Region X Head Start Association Conference*	Carillon Olmsted (503)725-4815
March 12-13	*NAEYC Teleconference Seminar on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*	Pat Spahr (202) 232-8777
March 12-14 Orlando, FL	*National Child Care Association Annual Conference*	NCCA (800) 543-7161
March 16-18 Montebello, CA	*Region IX Head Start Association Meeting*	Darvel Rhodes (213)724-6100
April 14-17 Minneapolis, MN	*National Head Start Association Annual Training Conference*	NHSA (703)739-0875

Promising Practices, *continued*

his or her experiences, to understand concepts, and to develop age appropriate literacy, numeracy, reasoning, problem solving and decision-making skills which form a foundation for school readiness and later school success."

On a daily basis, Head Start provides comprehensive services to children according to their individual needs. Some children enter Head Start with developmental delays, behavioral problems and other needs that staff, parents and others must address. During the past year, Chugachmuit Head Start helped to address the needs of a remarkable set of twins. Upon entering Head Start, the children had little language, aggressive behaviors, and were unable to focus on daily activities. Over the course of the year, the twins made some amazing gains. They developed good verbal skills, could listen and follow directions, and were able to interact with other children as well as adults. During the Child Find Screening at the Head Start center, the public school special education coordinator screened the twins and was amazed at the growth they had made during their year in Head Start. She attributed their remarkable growth to the Head Start program. Had the program not been in place in this community, these two children would have gotten further behind in their development and entered kindergarten completely ill prepared.

Chugachmuit Head Start serves children ages 3 through 5 in Nanwalek and Port Graham, Alaska. Services are provided through a combination of home-visitor and center-based programs.

Community Partnerships - Kenaitze Indian Tribe Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.41 - *Community Partnerships. The objective of this standard is to ensure that agencies in the community collaborate in order to provide the highest level of services to children and families and to advocate for a community that shares responsibility for the healthy development of children.*

Usually Head Start programs begin to develop partnerships with other community agencies and programs after they have been established and operating for a while. In the Kenai/Soldotna area, however, strong community partnerships already existed that have been advocating for a Head Start program to join their community because of the lack of services for young children in the area. In 1998, The Kenaitze Head Start Program was established to provide services to primarily native families in the Kenai/Soldotna area. The program serves 40 children and their families in a center-based option. They are in the process of working with Tribal Elders to develop and implement a culturally appropriate curriculum. The children have already visited the Tribal greenhouse, the Tribal fishing site and attended an Elder's luncheon. Tribal members and staff have taught children drumming, traditional crafts and are working on Denaina songs and words.

The Kenaitze Indian Head Start Program serves children age 3 and 4 in Kenai, Alaska. Services are provided through a center-based program.

The Alaska Native Home Base Video Project —Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska Head Start Program.

Head Start Performance Standard Subpart B - *Early Childhood Development and Health Services; and Subpart C - Family and Community Partnerships. Head Start's commitment to wellness embraces a comprehensive vision of health and well-being for children, families and staff. Subpart B of the Performance Standards address this vision by setting the standard for a wide range of services for education, early childhood development, nutrition, medical, dental and mental health, prenatal and infant care, and services for children with disabilities. Subpart C addresses the commitment that the entire range of Head Start services must be responsive and appropriate to each child and family's culture, ethnic and linguistic heritage and experience; and parents and family members must be involved in all aspects of the child's Head Start experience.*

Developing a project that embraces the range of Head Start services, commitment to parent involvement, and that is culturally appropriate is a complicated undertaking. The Tlingit and Haida Head Start Program, however, has accomplished this task through the Alaska Home Based Video Project. The project, titled, Ways of Knowing . . Parenting Strategies Through Tradition and Technology, uses new technologies to glean and share Native and other traditions, skills and strategies for understanding and raising children in this unique place we call Southeast Alaska. Through the use of video, increased home visits and supplemental materials, Tlingit and Haida Head Start will be able to reach into the homes and communities they are currently not able to serve - and to serve all families in more meaningful and useful ways. In addition, there are few, if any, early childhood education tools available for parents which embrace the Native culture very much alive in this region. This project will provide Native parents, children and the trainers who work with them, important links to role models and learning from their own culture and backgrounds in all program elements. Project materials include: a Parent Education, Prenatal, Infants and Toddlers video series of 15 - 10 minute videos ; a Preschool series of 21 - 20 minute videos; training, teaching materials, and home-visiting components for each of the video topics. The advantages of the Ways of Knowing project include:

- Prenatal parents, parents of infants and toddlers will have relevant materials they can use and view in the home between visits by Head Start and other program trainers.
- All video products are designed for use in the home by parents and children. The videos can also be distributed and seen on local television in all rural/urban areas in the state.
- Ongoing technical training of local Head Start staff to use video series appropriately with parents.
- A workbook to extend the concepts addressed in each video will be produced in the second year of the project to provide extended support to parents.

The Ways of Knowing project was funded by the (national) Department of Education to Tlingit and Haida Head Start. Project materials were developed by an Advisory committee, made up of Head Start, Infant Learning Programs, Southeast Regional Health Clinic, cultural experts and other childhood development programs. An international video production firm, RXL Pulitzer has produced the video series.

Tlingit and Haida Head Start serves children,age birth through 4 through both home-visitor and center-based programs. Head Start programs are located in Angoon, Hoonah, Klawock, Prince of Wales, Petersburg, Saxman, Juneau, Sitka, Wrangell, and Yakutat, Alaska.

On-site Health Care — Southcentral Foundation Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.20 Child Health; 1304.23 Child Nutrition; and 1304.24 Child Mental Health. *"Head Start grantees and delegate agencies must assist parents: in completing a schedule of health screenings, well-child exams, follow-up treatment for medical, dental and physical conditions; identifying each child's nutritional needs, obtaining a nutritional assessment and receiving nutritional information relevant to the*

child's well-being; and developing a regular schedule of on-site mental health consultations involving mental health professionals staff and parents."

Meeting the Head Start standards for health, nutrition and mental health care can be a daunting task for many Head Start families who do not have access to health care providers. The Southcentral Head Start Program has developed a system of health care that eliminates many of the obstacles parents and staff face in meeting the health care needs of children. Southcentral Foundation has established an on-site medical clinic where physicians and medical providers come to provide clinical services to the children and families enrolled in the Head Start program. Children receive physical exams, immunizations, well child exams, growth assessment, nutrition assessment, vision and hearing screening and other health related services. Families are also seen at the clinic for well baby, well child, sick child and family medicine services. Providers also conduct on site education sessions for prevention services and healthy lifestyle promotion. Additional on-site health services include: an on-site Mental Health Consultant who provides mental health services to the enrolled children and their families; a dental clinic where dentists and hygienists come to the center and do initial exams as well as restorative treatment and preventative treatment; and a Registered dietitian who does nutrition and growth assessments as well as conducts on-site classes on healthy food choices.

Southcentral Foundation Head Start provides comprehensive services to over 150 children age 2 through 4 and their families in the Anchorage area.

Infant/Toddler Model Program — Fairbanks Native Association Early Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.21. *"Grantee and delegate agencies' program of services for infants and toddlers must encourage . . . development of secure out-of- home attachments, trust and emotional security so that each child can explore the environment according to his or her own developmental level, .. support social and emotional development, . . .communication, . . .physical development. . health and nutrition needs."*

The Fairbanks Native Association Early Head Start Program began serving children age 6 weeks through 3 years in November, 1998. The program serves 8 children with two teachers. Care is available four days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. A federal Early Head Start grant covers 6 hours of daily expenses, the other hours are the responsibility of parents. The program focuses on the needs of the families and the individual needs of the children in all domains and places a strong emphasis on nurturing child/care giver relationships. Staff have chosen not to use high chairs, baby seats, cribs or swings. They believe the teacher is the person that can best support development of the child. Young children are fed in the arms of the teacher and when they are old enough to sit in a chair, they join the older children at the table. Cribs and swings are not used because they restrict movement and choices for infants and toddlers.

Fairbanks Native Association Early Head Start Program serves infants and toddlers through a center-based program in Fairbanks.

Family Partnerships — Fairbanks Native Association

Head Start Performance Standard 1304. *40 Family Partnerships and 1304. 50 Program Governance. Head Start grantees and delegate agencies must build partnerships with parents to establish mutual trust, identify family goals, strengths, necessary services and other supports. As part of this partnership, Head Start must establish opportunities for parents to achieve goals and receive necessary services and supports. Head Start programs must also establish with parents and families a process of shared decision-making and program governance through Parent Committees and Policy Councils.*

Once a month the Fairbanks Native Association demonstrates their successful efforts to build partnerships with parents, and community members. They have a strong eight member Parent Policy Council which meets each month. Each meeting this year has had perfect attendance from both the appointed members as well as the elected alternates to the Council. In addition, other interested parents have also been attending the meetings. The Council keeps establishing new policies that enhance the quality of services provided by the Head Start program. The most recent action is the new alcohol policy that states Head Start meetings or gatherings will not take place in an establishment that sells alcohol and that includes popular fast food restaurants that are often used by local families. Each month, parent potlucks are held as well that have been extremely successful and well attended. Their success is due in part to increased contacts with parents and families. There were more phone calls made to parents, monthly calendars and reminder flyers sent to parents regarding up-coming activities. The result of increased communications with parents is standing room only space at the gatherings. FNA invites anyone who may be interested to workshops and meetings to attend, not just parents. Many friends of families and staff from other programs in the community take advantage of workshops. Topics discussed at the meetings are planned to be relevant and related to needs of families such as "Positive Discipline" which is being presented in January. FNA feels that with more effort and encouragement extended to parents, more involvement is received; and the more parent involvement, the better services Head Start can provide through the child's first and most important teachers - parents and families.

The Fairbanks Native Association serves children age prenatal through 4 in the Fairbanks, Alaska area. Services are provided through both center-based and home-visitor programs.

Community Services — Golden Heart Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.41 (a)(2). *"Grantee and delegate agencies must take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs and to ensure that Early Head Start and Head Start programs respond to community needs."*

The community of Fairbanks has established a site where multiple services are available for their children and families. The Carol Brice Center serves as a resource and program delivery center that mirrors the complex needs of many families. Programs located in this center include the Golden Heart Head Start Program, Women/Infants/Children (WIC) nutrition program, a health clinic, the Fairbanks Family Literacy Project, a job training and employment resource program, a child care program, and parent education program "Parenting is a Mixed Bag." This comprehensive service center provides benefits not only for families, but also for programs. Parents and families are able to use the job training center, and in particular its computer lab, to take classes, look for job opportunities, prepare resumes and share ideas with other adults. Families can access medical care through the health clinic, receive nutrition education and sign up for the WIC food program. Families can also receive important parenting supports through the parenting education program and access to a quality child care program.

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Promising Practices, *continued*

The Golden Heart Head Start Program is continually realizing benefits from the community services center. Head Start has a Memorandum of Understanding with the health clinic to provide health screenings and follow-up. A Head Start staff member serves on the health clinic board to help plan services and training needs. Training and education programs for staff and families are shared which helps reduce programs costs and broaden the types of training available. Head Start staff has found that helping families meet the goals in their family plans, like job training, securing employment, improving literacy, or getting health care, is more realistic because the services families need are so accessible.

Golden Heart Head Start Program serves children ages 3 through 4 in the Fairbanks, Alaska area. Services are provided through both center-based and home-visitor programs.

Getting Ready for the Future — Bristol Bay Head Start

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.20 Child Health - "Head Start grantees and delegate agencies must . . assist parents in completing a schedule of health screenings, exams and needed treatments."; and 1304.41 Transitions . . . "grantees and delegate agencies will establish and maintain procedures to support successful transitions for enrolled children and families from Head Start into elementary school."

Before accepting a child into the Bristol Bay Head Start Program in Togiak, Alaska, staff make an extra effort to assure that all program requirements for health screenings are met. Staff ensure that requirements for immunizations, physical, vision, dental screenings and assessments are completed. They then make an extra effort to remind parents to carry out follow-ups and make sure that needed treatment is completed. Staff also help to prepare children to make the transition from Head Start into the public school system by supporting their language development. The staff speak mainly Yupik with the children during the first half of the Head Start year. During the second half of the year, the staff and children use English, since English is used as the primary language in public school. Helping children develop fluency in their home language which is Yupik, is a critical factor if children are develop fluency in oral and written school language which is English.

Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start serves children birth to age 5 through center-based programs. Programs are located in Dillingham, Newhalen, Manokotak, New Stuyahok and Togiak, Alaska.

STATUS REPORT

Alaska's Children

Municipal Assistance

Children's programs and services do more than just support the health and well-being of children and families. These programs also contribute to the economic well-being of the communities they serve:

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program is a federally funded program that will bring over 21 million dollars into the state during FY 99. The program provides nutritious food, nutrition education and assessment for children and families. The program serves 24,524 infants, children and pregnant and breast feeding mothers. A budget breakdown of the program shows:

- Approximately 11.5 million dollars goes for food purchases in local grocery stores throughout the state
- Approximately 5 million dollars goes for salaries of community WIC personnel
- Approximately 45 thousand dollars goes to Providence Hospital for a breastfeeding peer counselor project
- Approximately 3 million dollars goes for infant formula rebates.

The Alaska Head Start Program is a federally and state funded program that provides comprehensive services to children and families throughout Alaska. During FY 98, the program budget included:

- a federal investment of $15,603,694 million,
- a state investment of $5,489,951 million, and
- community in-kind investments of $4,249,339

These dollars hire staff, purchase food and program supplies, rent or purchase buildings and pay for heating and utility costs in each of the 94 communities Head Start serves.

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Alaska Head Start Association

NEWS

"Head Start Awareness Week". Each year the Alaska Head Start Association sponsors an Association Meeting in Juneau. The purpose of this meeting is to bring parents, staff and friends of the Association together in Juneau for education, training and the opportunity to work with legislators and state officials on behalf of Alaska's children and families. Following is the agenda for the Head Start Week.

Head Start Awareness Week - Meeting and Training Agenda
Location - McPhetres Parish Hall 523 Gold Street

February 15 - Monday:
Alaska Head Start Association Meeting and training

February 16 - Tuesday:
Morning - Welcome to Juneau; The legislative administrative process in Alaska; Advocacy Tips

Afternoon - Alaska Head Start Association Affiliate and Committee Meetings

Noon - Friends Affiliate
1:00 p.m. Directors Affiliate
2:00 p.m. Parents Affiliate
3:00 p.m. Staff Affiliate
4:00 p.m. Training: Conference 2000

February 17 - Wednesday:
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Discussion of the Draft Alaska Head Start Strategic Plan
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.: Child Health Insurance Program Training:

February 18 - Thursday:
Morning and Afternoon - Time for individuals to visit with legislators and state officials

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COLLABORATION
B•R•I•E•F•I•N•G•S

Denali Kidcare. For the first time, families who are unable to afford private health insurance for their children and do not qualify for Medicaid health coverage programs, will have access to health care coverage through Alaska's child health insurance plan. The program was proposed by Governor Knowles as part of his "Smart Start" for children program and was approved by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala in January.

The plan called "Denali Kidcare," will begin extending insurance benefits on March 1, 1999. Children who are eligible for coverage must be age 19 and under, have family incomes under 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (about $33,000 for a family of 3). Pregnant women are also eligible for health care coverage. Children who are covered under private or other health insurance plans are not eligible. The Denali Kidcare insurance plan is funded through the federal government with a required match by each state who chooses to enroll in the program. Alaska will contribute approximately 28% of the estimated cost of services. It is anticipated 11,600 children are currently eligible for this expanded health coverage program. In addition to the state and federal funds, Alaska was awarded $1 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as part of a national public-private partnership to increase the number of children who enroll in and benefit from health insurance coverage. Alaska will use the grant money to design and conduct outreach programs for eligible children, simplify the enrollment process; and coordinate existing coverage programs for low-income children.

Outreach efforts for Denali Kidcare will begin February 1, application forms will be available by mid-February, and program benefits available by March 1, 1999. For more information about this program, contact Deborah Smith, at 907-465-1696.

Alaska Children Trust Request for Proposals for FY 2000. Funding for community-based grants for the prevention of child abuse and neglect is being made available for a third year. The RFP will be released on February 12, 1999. A letter of intent from interested applicants must be received by March 5. Grants must be postmarked by April 23 and received in the office by April 30, 1999. This year, to cut down on administrative costs, the RFP will not be mailed out unless an applicant requests a copy. For more information about the grant process or to request a copy of the RFP, contact Shari Paul, Alaska Children's Trust at P.O. Box 112100, Juneau, AK 99811, Fax: (907)465-8638, or email: spaul@comregaf.state.ak.us

Tlingit and Haida Head Start Home Base Video Project. Two of the videos developed for the Tlingit and Haida Head Start Program *Ways of Knowing Project*, were recently honored at an award ceremony in Seattle, Washington. The video production firm of RXL Pulitzer, who produced the video series, submitted two from the series to the Neil Shipman Women in Film Academy and both were selected for awards for educational excellence. The videos honored were: Childbirth and Newborn Care, and Preschool and Early Childhood.

Alaska's
Children

Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project
Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs
P.O. Box 112100
Juneau, Alaska 99811-2100

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HS News, *continued*

Late Afternoon - Head Start Celebration/Reception at McPhetres Hall (ends promptly at 6:00 p.m.)

February 19 - Friday
Morning: Input from legislative and state meetings - What did we learn?
Advocacy planning.
Afternoon: New Child Protection Law; Update from Head Start Directors/Programs

Association Meeting Minutes. The Alaska Head Start Association Board of Directors met on December 11 via teleconference. Election results were posted at the meeting, they were: The Staff Affiliate elected Nancy Hannigan from Region X and Janet Bowen from Region XI. Chris Moore is the Region X alternate. The Parent Affiliate elected Barney Edwards from Region X and Patty Brauer from Region XI. The Friends Affiliate elected Sharon Trish and Tony Vaska. Susan Cocklin is the alternate. Sharon Trish and Eileen Cummings are co-chairs of the affiliate. The Director Affiliate elected Shirley Pittz and Pam Gingue from Region X and Sarah Kuenzli from Region XI. Bonnie Powell has submitted her resignation and the Directors will have another meeting to elect her successor.

The following actions were taken at the January 15, 1999 Head Start Association Teleconference meeting:

Nancy Hannigan was nominated and elected to serve as the Association Treasurer for the next two years. She replaces Clarence Johnson who has served and worked hard as treasurer for the Association.

The agenda for the annual meeting in Juneau was finalized and is reprinted in this section for those who are interested. The meeting promises to be, as always, challenging, informative and fun.

Committee Updates presented at the meeting include: The FY'00 State Head Start Request for $750,000 to serve 150 additional children was included in the Governor's capital budget request. Additional work needs to be done on the Health and Safety (quality) initiative. The Head Start Conference is still in the planning process and is still scheduled to be held at the Captain Cook Hotel for an estimated 400 participants. More planning for the conference will take place at the Association meeting in Juneau.

Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project

Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs • Quarterly Report • Spring 1999

PS 028936

Alaska's Children

The Developing Child

Part 1 – Early Care and Education

Several years ago at a statewide conference, a Head Start dad told the following story . . .

As the time drew near for our daughter to enter public school, we spent time telling her how important school was and how proud we were of her. We talked about how her experiences at home and in Head Start had given her lots of skills she could use in the big school. When the day came for her to start kindergarten, we wrapped her in a new dress and proudly presented her to the teacher. I felt that we were giving to this teacher our most precious gift. Sadly, the teacher did not really understand the extent of the gift we were giving, or all of the growth, development and learning our child had accomplished before she came to kindergarten. After that day, I felt that I had one more job to do - to help people understand what a gift children are, and how much has gone into that gift before they ever reach the door of the public school building . . . .

As this story illustrates, children do not begin learning when they enter kindergarten. They are, in fact, learning from the moment of birth.

When Learning Begins

During the last ten years, the field of neuroscience has gained more knowledge about early brain growth and development than ever before. The new research shows that at birth the brain is remarkably unfinished - only those parts of the brain that are necessary for survival are functioning. Our genetic codes have directed the brain to complete those circuits that control heart rate, breathing, reflexes and body temperature. During the next ten years, the brain will grow and develop at an astounding rate. By age three, roughly 85% of the brain's core structures will be organized. By age ten, the root neurological structures for all future functioning will be established providing the foundation for more complex feeling, thinking and behaviors during the rest of the child's life.

Neuroscientists have confirmed the brain's greatest growth draws to a close around age ten. This does not mean that children and

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The Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
For more information, contact the Alaska Head Start Office at (907) 465-4860.
Project Director–Marilyn Webb; Newsletter Editor–Dorothy Douglas

Developing Child, *continued*

adults stop learning - learning happens throughout the entire life cycle. But, through the first decade of life, a child's brain is more than twice as active as that of an adult. With the exception of infancy, there is no other time in human life when so much is learned in so brief a period of time. Before birth, a child's genetic code guides the growth and development of the brain. After birth, children learn from their daily experiences and environment.

Children are learning all the time. They are learning whenever they are interacting with each other, with their parents, with other adults or with objects in their environment. Learning is never confined to a particular time of day, a particular place or a specific person. Children draw from the daily experiences, stimulation and nurturing they receive from their parents, caregivers and teachers.

Children begin their learning experiences at home under the care and guidance of their parents. Almost all parents have a natural disposition to support their children's growth and development. Historically, most children stayed at home with a parent or extended family member until they entered public school. Families usually stayed in the same communities and neighborhoods, close to grandparents, cousins and aunts. The economic demands on families were such that usually only one parent needed to work outside of the home. Divorce rates were very low and families remained, for the most part, intact. For a long period of time, family and community structures changed very little. The last thirty years however, have seen some dramatic changes to family systems and the infrastructure that supports them. Major economic, social and demographic changes have occurred that significantly affect families and children. Families are more mobile with extended family members living thousands of miles apart. Neighborhoods are constantly changing as economies shift, families move and communities grow or decline. Perhaps the most significant change has been the economic demands on modern families. Housing, transportation, health care, utilities and leisure activities all cost more, and wages and job benefits are not keeping up with the cost of living. For a growing number of families, these demands have forced both parents into the workforce. Current data about families shows that over 68% of all children under the age of 5 live in families where parents are working outside the home; 50% of all mothers are back in the workforce within the first year of a child's life; and over half of all children live in single parent households. Employed parents and single parents often have exhausting schedules as they struggle to meet the demands of children, jobs, day to day household tasks and the need to find out-of-home care for their young children.

Today, a child's learning environment has expanded well beyond the home. Many young children are now spending part, or all of their day in child care, preschools, Head Start programs and other out-of-home care environments. In addition to parents and extended family members, child care providers, teachers, foster parents and other adults also contribute to a child's growth and development. If a child is spending time in an environment that is not stimulating, lacking in learning experiences and with providers who are poorly trained, then critical time is being wasted. Children need and deserve quality early care and learning environments.

Tlingit and Haida Language Immersion Program — Head Start graduate.

Child Development

Quality early care and learning environments are built around the children and families they serve. The foundation of those environments should be based on the knowledge and principles of child development. **Child development can be defined as a body of knowledge about how children develop and learn.** Child development embraces the concept that every child is a whole human being to be nurtured, cared for and cared about, as well as to be educated. Most children, regardless of individual characteristics and family experiences, pass through stages of development as they learn to think, reason and get along in society. The principle areas or "domains" of child development include:

- **Physical Development** is the gradual gaining of control over large and small muscles. It includes acquiring large muscle skills such as sitting, crawling, walking, running and throwing; and small muscle skills such as holding, pinching and flexing fingers and toes. In addition, coordinated movement such as eye-hand coordination is important and is used to accomplish small muscle tasks such as fitting a piece in a puzzle.
- **Social development** is the process of children getting to know and value the people in their lives. It involves being able to establish and maintain relationships, develop social skills and get along with other children. Social development includes learning to share, cooperate, take turns and negotiate with others. Children's relationships begin in infancy when as babies they respond to the familiar voice, smell and touch of a parent or primary caregiver. It continues when, as toddlers they learn to play alongside each other. As preschoolers, children learn to negotiate and cooperate with other children, their parents and caregivers.
- **Emotional Development**, which refers to the feelings children have about themselves, people in their lives and the environment in which they live, is closely tied to social development. Five developmental milestones have been identified that are the foundation for children's ongoing emotional development. Children who master them are likely to be successful - in school, at

home and in their relationships with peers.

- **Cognitive Development** is the process of learning to think and to reason. Children naturally develop cognitive skills as they explore and investigate everything in their environment. Children will continue to develop and refine their cognitive skills as they grow. With experience, they add new information in an orderly way to what they have already learned.

Although scientists and researchers have studied and defined how children typically develop in these domains, individual children do not always fit into typical categories. Child development can be influenced by other factors. Parents and early care providers must also be knowledgeable about basic principles of child development. Briefly these include:

- Development in each of the domains is closely related and interdependent. For example, a child's language development affects their ability to establish social relationships with adults and other children.
- Development occurs in an orderly and predictable sequence, from the simple to the complex, for example, the development of movement and mobility. At birth babies can move their limbs, but only in a jerky, uncontrolled fashion. The more a baby moves his arm or leg, the stronger and more refined movements become. A child will progressively refine his movements from reaching, grabbing, sitting, crawling, walking and running, to performing a ballet.
- Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child. Each child is unique, with an individual pattern and timing of growth. All children have their own special interests and strengths. For some children, special needs or abilities are identified which must be considered when gauging their individual growth and development.
- Development is directly influenced by the early experiences, both positive and negative, that children receive from their environment. More than anything else, children need to have nurturing, responsive, predictable care and secure attachments to adults. The simple act of picking up a crying infant, holding her close, touching her face and hands, speaking in a calm and comforting voice stimulates the emotional neurological pathways to become stronger. Conversely, neuroscientists have documented that sustained early abuse and neglect, emotional deprivation or exposure to violence at an early age can interfere with normal child development. If a child's early experiences are fear and stress, then the neurochemcial responses to fear and stress become the stimuli that shape the developing brain. A child who is abused early in life, or lives in an unstimulating environment is much more likely to suffer impairments in cognitive learning abilities, emotional and impulsive behavior control, the ability to form secure attachments later in life and physical development.
- Development and learning occur in, and are influenced by, multiple social and cultural contexts. Child development is best understood within the context of a child's family and community. A child's experiences in the home setting enormously impact how and what the child learns. A child who grows up in rural areas is likely to have very different learning experiences than a child who grows up in a large urban area. Culture also influences child development. Each child's sense of self is strongly rooted in his home culture. A child tends to flourish in environments that acknowledge and respect their beliefs and customs.
- A child's health, physical well-being and psychological needs for safety and security directly influence development. A child who is in ill health, hungry, hurt or fearful is not ready to learn. Beyond these obvious observations, researchers are discovering some critical connections between child health and learning. For example, a child with chronic ear infections cannot hear the sounds that are the foundation for developing oral language. If oral language does not develop at the appropriate time, the child will experience later difficulties as she begins to transfer oral language into reading and writing.

Putting Theory into Practice

When parents and caregivers understand the concepts and principles that affect child growth and development, they are ready to build the daily experiences and activities that support children as they grow and learn.

Activities and experiences should be appropriate for the age and stage of a child's development. Infants learn by moving their bodies and using their senses. They need safe, sanitary materials they can put in their mouths, and safe, open places for rolling over, crawling, pulling up and learning to walk. Toddlers are always in motion. They need an environment that offers challenging, but safe opportunities to run, jump, climb, push, pull, fill, dump and pour. Preschoolers are curious about how things work and the effects their actions have on objects and materials. A good environment for preschoolers has lots of variety, encourages a sense of competence and offers consistency while also responding to children's changing skills and interests.

The most effective activities for young children are those that encourage development across several domains. For example, while making and playing a game, a child uses small motor skills to cut and paste pictures on cardboard, cognitive skills to sort and organize the pictures, social skills to take turns using materials and emotional skills to exhibit self-control after making a mistake. An important feature of appropriate activities is that they provide enjoyment at different skill levels and abilities, and allow a child to make decisions about how she will use materials or express creativity.

Quality learning environments also include people - family members, child care providers, teachers, health care providers and others. A child's primary relationship is most often with a parent, but today, a child also spends time in the care of someone other than a parent. That relationship must also have key ingredients.

Beyond the Home

Out-of-home quality early care and learning programs have caregivers that nurture and provide safe, secure and predictable environments that a child can count on every day. In order to give children the kind of relationships and experiences they need, caregivers need specialized training and skills. Caregivers need more than just basic information about first aid, CPR and minimum safety standards. Quality care requires real knowledge about child development - what children are capable of doing and how to support their growth and development. Caregivers not only need pre-service training before they enter the field they also need high quality, ongoing training and technical assistance.

Sustaining a workforce of well-trained

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Developing Child, *continued*

caregivers depends not only on the personal motivation of the person who has chosen to care for children, but on the infrastructure that supports the caregiver - salaries, job benefits, regulations and standards that govern the care and education of young children.

Nationwide, several million workers spend their days caring for and educating the young children of working parents. Approximately three million people are employed in some kind of early care setting, whether in a child care center, Head Start facility, public or private school, their own home, or the home of a child in their care.

Most children who are in out-of-home care settings are enrolled in child care. Child care intersects every aspect of our efforts to build healthy and economically stable communities. The child care workforce allows employed parents to keep working and is responsible for the learning environments that nurture the communities youngest citizens. Despite the acknowledged importance of the child care workforce, the occupation remains one of lowest paid, has the highest turn-over rates and generally carries almost no job benefits.

The average center-based child care teacher earns roughly $6.70 an hour. In Alaska, the average hourly wage according to an article published by the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner in 1998, was $8.00 an hour - slightly higher than the national average, but not significant when factored in with the higher cost of living in Alaska. More than two-thirds of full-time child care workers have annual earnings below the poverty threshold, the highest concentration of poverty-wage workers in any industry. Child care as an occupation usually has no job benefits, such as paid leave, pension plans, health insurance or overtime compensation. Low wages and lack of benefits contribute to an occupation with one of the highest turnover rates in the nation. Roughly one-third of the nation's child care workforce leaves the job each year.

Because young children need to form secure relationships with their care givers and need to count on the same well-prepared adult day after day, high staff turn-over rates can be particularly distressing for them. When a child is forced to go to a new child care facility or adjust to a new staff member every few months, she can become anxious and fearful. What a child learns in these situations is a pattern of mistrust and disruption, not consistency and predictability. Moreover, maintaining high standards of staff training and knowledge about child development becomes nearly impossible when staff leave their jobs every three to six months.

Panchita and friend —Tlingit & Haida Head Start.

The Economics of Child Care

Recently, at a community forum to review Alaska's draft State Plan for Child Care Programs, child care providers stated their number one priority was to stabilize the workforce through enhanced wages and employment benefits, education and training opportunities and increased public awareness of quality early care environments. Accomplishing these goals with the fees parents currently pay for child care, however, may be unrealistic. For example, monthly fees in Fairbanks for infants ranged from $520 to $567 per month, $485 to $550 per month for toddlers and $425 to $550 per month for preschoolers. These monthly fees must cover employee wages and benefits (if any), facility costs, equipment, insurance, food and transportation. One center director calculated that in order to pay child care staff a living wage, provide necessary training and education and meet other business expenses, the fees for child care would have to double. Many parents, who are themselves working at low-wage jobs, can barely pay the $5,000 to $6,000 yearly child care fee, let alone $12,000 a year.

During the last 10 years, government, business and the public have begun to acknowledge how important early care and education is, and to recognize the dilemma that working parents and child care providers face. On a national level, federal funds have been granted to states to address child care issues. These federal funds assist parents with the cost of child care while they are in job training or education programs, or help parents with low-incomes so they can keep working. The funds also provide some support to providers through training and quality improvement initiatives.

Current federal funding, however, is not adequate to serve all of the low-income families who are eligible for assistance or to pay child care providers an adequate fee that truly reflects the work they do. In fact, provider rates are often based on the subsidy payment rates allowed under the federal funding programs.

States have the option of supplementing federal funding and promoting quality care environments for children. In 1975, Alaska established the Day Care Assistance Program, which helped to pay the cost of child care for low and moderate income parents while they worked or trained for work. The state also approved the Child Care Grant Program in 1981 for child care providers. This program provided small grants to providers to purchase books and other educational materials, equipment, food or to increase staff salaries and job benefits. Both of these programs were restricted to providers who were licensed by the state to provide child care services.

Another indicator of quality is requiring that early care programs meet important standards and regulations. Most states have child care licensing laws and regulations that re-

quire providers to meet standards for training, safety, child/staff ratios, security and background checks. Licensing also gives states legal authority to inspect and monitor child care facilities and to investigate complaints or reports of harm to children. States do not have many of these regulatory options with unlicensed providers. Alaska requires that all providers who care for more than eight children obtain an occupational license. Recently, the number of licensed child care providers in Alaska has declined. In 1997-98, the number of licensed providers in Alaska decreased 9.5%. This loss may be attributed, in part, to federal funding guidelines that do not require providers to be licensed by states to receive subsidy payments for child care services. Because an increasing number of providers do not have child care licenses, Alaska developed a category of providers who must be registered by the state in order to care for children whose parents receive federal child care assistance. The Registered Provider category, however, only requires that providers meet minimum health and safety standards and have a background check. In 1999, the state legislature replaced state funding for both the Child Care Grant and Day Care Assistance programs with federal funds. This action will eliminate the requirement for providers to be licensed to receive these funds and have additional impacts on the number of regulated child care providers in the state.

Despite these challenges, many children do spend time during their day happily engaged in activities that stimulate their individual growth and development. They are fortunate to have parents and caregivers that understand their needs, nurture their abilities and provide a safe, secure environment. But there are also many children who spend their days in sub-standard care, or who experience other challenges in their young lives.

Other Challenges

Today, many of our children and their families are in trouble. Of the twelve million children under the age of three in the United States today, a growing and alarming number are affected by one or more risk factors that undermine healthy development. In Alaska, the number of reports of child harm, of all types has increased dramatically since 1989. From 1989 to 1997, child reports of harm increased 97.4%. In March 1998, there were 1,231 children in state custody in foster care. In 1997, 10% of Alaska's children lived in poverty; 29% of our children lived in families who do not have full-time employment; Medicaid or other public sector health insurance covered 25% and 14% were without health coverage of any kind.

Because poverty, child abuse and neglect, poor health, lack of medical care and out-of-home placements can have such a profound effect on a child's well-being and ability to learn, programs that help children overcome these risk factors are very important. Each of these programs are staffed by adults who have the opportunity and responsibility to nurture children and help them as they grow. The indicators of quality care and education - training/education in child development, adequate financing for salaries and educational materials, program accountability through standards and regulations - should also extend to these programs and their staff.

For health care providers, the study of child development serves as the basic science for much of the work they do; just as biological sciences provide the justification for preventive and therapeutic interventions in disease. The frequency and delivery of child health services have been designed to target key developmental stages. By assessing the child's development in all of the domains, health care providers are able to establish a pattern of well-being, begin preventive health measures such as immunizations and determine if interventions are necessary. Special populations, such as children with disabilities, chronic illnesses or living in chaotic households, are high risk both medically and developmentally. Often health care providers are the first to identify developmental delays or problems. Early identification and intervention are critical for young children. Because the human brain is growing and changing so rapidly during the early years, it is also high adaptable. At no other time will the brain be able to overcome or compensate for disabilities, injuries or trauma than during the first 10 years of life. For this reason early intervention is not only more successful, it is clearly less expensive than treating chronic problems later in life.

As already noted, early abuse and neglect, witnessing or being the victim of violence and other negative experiences can have life-long effects on children. Recent surveys of prison inmates in Alaska sadly point out that as many as 90% of the population may have been abused or neglected as children. When children are placed in protective custody, social workers, foster parents, attorneys, judges and law enforcement personnel need a clear understanding of the harm that early negative experiences can have on child growth and development. If child development became the legal and administrative guide for child protective services, decisions about appropriate placements for children might be made very differently.

Head Start is a program specifically designed to support low-income children and their parents to over-come the risks of poverty. Head Start has always been based on the knowledge and principles of child development and is committed to implementing programs that encourage the growth and development of all children. Head Start has been fortunate to have many of the supports in place that promote quality early care and education,

Continued on page 8

Tlingit & Haida Language Immersion Program — Head Start graduate.

COLLABORATION
B•R•I•E•F•I•N•G•S

Publications of note.

Children's Cabinet 1998 Report - Initiatives and accomplishments of the Knowles/Ulmer Children's Cabinet, and ***Alaska Children's Trust 1998 Annual Report*** - history, goals, funding information and descriptions of grant awards, call Shari Paul at (1-800-643-KIDS (5437) for copies of these reports.

Conference Proceedings, The Early Years, The Critical Years - Implications of Brain Research on Early Childhood Policy and Practice in Alaska. Summary of information presented at the conference with recommendations and activities that can be used to support the children and families, and resources for additional training and information. Contact the Head Start Office at 465-4860 for a copy of the report.

1999 Kids Count Data Book — State Profiles of Child Well-Being. State by state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. by counting, describing and locating the most fragile of the current generation of children.

Alaska Children's Programs and Services on the move.

With the passage of House Bill 40 by the Legislature this session, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs will be disbanded and specific programs will be merged into other state departments. The Legislation will consolidate a number of early childhood programs into an expanded Department of Education. The program consolidation will transfer the Lead Agency responsibility for the Child Care Development Funds, child care provider licensing and monitoring, child care subsidy programs and Head Start to Education. After a protracted debate in several Senate committees, the Legislature agreed to call the expanded department the Department of Education and Early Development, rather than the Department of Child Development and Education that had been requested by Governor Knowles. Transfer of these functions will begin on July 1, and be completed in phases over the next year.

Indicators of Well-Being for Alaska's Children.

It's been said that: What tends to get measured tends to gets done." That's why Alaska and 12 other states are working with federal officials on a two-year project to develop measures of child health and well-being. Known as indicators, these measures will enable Alaskans to see how children in their community, region and state are faring in the areas of health, family stability, school readiness and school success.

To understand how indicators work, consider the weather. We cannot directly measure the weather, but we can measure indicators of weather, such as the temperature, precipitation and humidity. When we want to know the current state of our weather, we look at these indicators to piece together a picture.

Economists use indicators, too. By tracking measures such as the employment rate, average income and interest rates they get signals about how the economy is doing overall. In the same way, we can gauge the status of children over time by measuring the various components of health and well-being. For example, we can gather data on infant mortality, children living in poverty and the number of teen pregnancies. The idea is to give Alaskans the information they need to develop strategies for improving the lives of children.

Some information already is available. Kids Count Alaska publishes child indicators data annually through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. But many feel that — as the main provider of education and social services — the state should be directly involved in collecting, analyzing and sharing information about the well-being of children. Efforts are under way to strengthen the collaboration between Kids Count Alaska and the state's child indicators project through the sharing of resources and expertise.

The Alaska Child Indicators project will soon be circulating a draft set of child indicators and looking for comments from Head Start directors and others who work with children. For more information about this project and how your community can get involved please call Margaret Thomas at 465-1768.

Alaska Kindergarten Developmental Profile.

Last year, Senate Bill 36 directed the Department of Education to develop a comprehensive system of student assessment to be used uniformly in all Alaska school districts. The system must include a developmental profile to be completed for each student upon entering school. With that in mind, the Department facilitated the work of an Early Childhood Assessment Committee to help develop the Alaska Kindergarten Developmental Profile. The Profile includes developmental information in the areas of physical well-being and motor development, language and literacy development, personal-social development, thinking and cognitive development and child health background information. The Profile provides the framework for the minimum categories of developmental information that are to be assessed at the school level and submitted to the Department of Education. The Profile will be required for all children entering Kindergarten for the 1999-2000 school year. For more information about the Profile, contact Kathi Wineman at 465-8706.

Child Support Enforcement (CSED), Child Care, Head Start Collaboration Project Update.

The (CSED) Juneau office has completed the first year of the Child Care and Head Start Collaboration Project. We are anxious to continue efforts to help families with their child support issues. We appreciated the interest and enthusiasm from Head Start, child care providers and family service agencies and staff during this year.

During the year, Melinda Cormany, Project Coordinator, traveled to 12 communities in Southeast and Juneau. In each community Head Start, Child care providers and family service agency staff were given training to broaden their understanding of the child support system. Materials and handouts were distributed to share with parents. This collaboration has heightened awareness that child support is essential to meet the needs of children when the parents

Collaboration Briefings, *continued*

no longer live in the same household. Teachers and staff are aware of family concerns and have assisted CSED in directing parents to seek help with new and existing child support cases. For more information about this project or CSED information, contact Melinda Cormany at 465-5197.

The CSED would like to thank everyone who participated in the project this year. We sincerely appreciate your time and efforts. It is our hope that by working together, we will reach our goal of helping parents in need of assistance.

Early Learning Trust Fund.

On March 25, U.S. Senators Stevens (Alaska), Dodd, Jeffords, Kerry and Kennedy introduced legislation to create an Early Learning Trust Fund. The bill as proposed will provide 10 billion dollars over five years to states to strengthen and expand early education programs for children under 6. Governors will receive grants, and communities along with parents, will decide how these funds can best be used. The aid will be distributed based on a formula, which takes into account the total number of young children in the state. States will have the flexibility to invest in an array of strategies to support young children, including: strengthening pre-kindergarten programs, helping communities make the best use of early learning programs, ensuring that special needs children have access to the early learning services they need, strengthening Early Head Start, expanding Head Start to include full day, year-round services. Congress is currently considering this legislation.

Denali KidCare.

A new state of Alaska program to ensure that children and teens of both working and non-working families can have health insurance is now available. The program, called Denali KidCare provides excellent insurance coverage for children and teens through age 18, and for pregnant women who meet income and other eligibility guidelines. Income guidelines are based on family size. For example, if you have four members in your family, and your income does not exceed approximately $41,140, and you have no other health insurance coverage, you may qualify for Denali KidCare. It is easy to apply for the program and applications are available at many places including your local hospital and local health center. For more information or an application, please call the Denali KidCare office at 1-888-318-8890 (toll free outside of Anchorage) or 269-6529 in the Anchorage area. The application can also be downloaded from the Denali KidCare website: www.hss.state.ak.us/dma/denali.htm

Calendar of Events

June 10-12 Anchorage, AK	*Alaska Head Start Association* Quarterly Meeting	RurAL CAP
June 9-12 Cincinnati, OH	*NAEYC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Dev.*	NAEYC (800) 424-2460
June 26-July 1 Washington, D.C.	*9th National Indian Head Start Training Conference — Soaring to New Heights*	NIHSA (405) 360-2919
June 28-July 3 Washington, D.C.	*Head Start Collaboration Network Meeting*	Barbara White (703) 243-0495
June 29 Seattle, WA	*Region X Regional Coordinating Council Meeting*	HSQIC (503) 725-4815
August 4-6 Seattle, WA	*Region X Early Head Start Conference*	HSQIC (503) 725-4815

Federal Dollars Take Over State Programs.

State funding for Head Start and Child Care programs was reduced during the 1999 Legislative session and supplanted with federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. About three years ago, states were given a block of funds to implement their welfare reform programs. States have been allowed to keep funds not directly spent on welfare reform efforts, and to use these "TANF Savings" for specific needs such as child care, Head Start, Foster Care, etc. States will not be getting additional funds to replace these TANF Savings once they are spent. This year, the Legislature agreed to use a large portion of the TANF Savings to replace State General Fund money in an effort to cut state spending. Head Start and Child Care Program state funds supplanted by federal TANF includes:

- Head Start - **$2,361,100**
- Day Care Assistance Program - **$9,761,100** (approximately 4 million was replaced in FY 99 and continued in FY 00)
- Child Care Grant Program - **$1,725,100**

Once federal funds are used to replace state funds, federal regulations and guidelines will govern the use of the money, not the state's. For example, state guidelines require that child care grant and subsidy funds be used for state licensed child care providers. Federal guidelines do not require that child care providers be licensed.

TANF Savings have also been used to supplant state funds for a number of other health, child protection and family support programs. At the present rate of use, these savings will be completely expended in about two years. Currently, no plans have been included in the state's long term financial plan to replace the TANF funds when they are no longer available. Children and families will be at-risk as services are reduced.

Teacher and Student, Literacy Links, Glacier Valley Elementary School, Juneau.

Developing Child, *continued*

including training, education and credentialing requirements for staff; regulations and standards that mandate the services children and families will receive and funding that support programs so they can meet the Head Start standards of care and education. For better or worse, Head Start has been used as a yardstick to measure other early care and education programs. Head Start salaries, while still well below public school teacher salaries, are still notably better than child care providers. Training, education and job mentoring are built-in components of Head Start so that staff can meet mandated standards. Federal funds support the purchase of facilities, equipment, supplies and transportation. These and other program enhancements have sustained Head Start as a quality early care and education program for children. Long-term studies of Head Start show that, despite the risks posed by poverty, children who have been in Head Start enter kindergarten well prepared to continue their learning experiences.

The Gift

When children enter public school, they may have come from a home environment where they have read books, painted pictures, explored a beach, or they may have just spent a lot of time in front of a television. Some children will have gone from their homes into foster care. Over 60% of Alaskan children will make the transition to public school from a child care home, center program or preschool. About 22% of the low-income eligible children in Alaska will have benefited from Head Start before they enter public school. Each of these children are unique. Their early learning experiences have built their individual strengths and helped them overcome risk factors. Children are a gift, given into our care. The question is - as we plan our days, our careers and our public budgets, are we caring enough?

Information Sources: *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision in Infants, Children and Adolescents.* National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health; *Nurturing Children and Enhancing Children's Growth and Development. Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community. The Early Years, the Critical Years: Implications of Brain Research on Early Childhood Policy and Practice in Alaska*, Conference Proceedings. "Early Brain Development and Child Care." Healthy Child Care America, Volume 3, Number 1. 1999; "Child Care Employment: Implications for Women's Self Sufficiency and for Child Development," The Foundation for Child Development, Working Paper Series.

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STATUS REPORT

Alaska's Children

Provider Wages

1997 State Occupational Employment and Wage Data shows the average hourly wages for early care and education providers in Alaska is:

- Preschool teachers (directors) $11.01/hour
- Child Care Center directors/staff $8.09/hour
- Child Care Providers (general) $6.00/hour*

**category added at local providers' request*
Source: Center for the Child Care Workforce, March 1999

The Child Care Workforce

Child care is one of the fastest growing occupations in the country and one of the largest occupations for low-income women. Low wages, lack of employment benefits, poor working conditions—all contribute to high staff turnover, which have been shown to have direct and harmful effects on the quality of care children receive. Roughly 1/3 of the nation's child care workforce leave the job each year. The only occupation with a higher staff turnover rate is gas station attendants.

Source: The Foundation for Child Development
Working Paper Series, Child Care Employment, January 1999

Alaska Indicators of Child Well-Being

	1985	1996
Percent low-birth weight babies	4.9	5.5
Infant mortality	10.8	7.2
Child death rate per 100,000 age 1-14	56	30
Rate of teen deaths per 100,000 age 15-19	105	93
Teen birth rate per 1,000 females	26	26
Percent of teens who are high school dropouts	10	9
Percent of teen not attending school not working	13	10
Percent of children living with parents not employment full time	47	29
Percent of children in poverty	12	10
Percent of families headed by single Parent	22	26

Source: Kids Count Data Book, 1999
Anne E. Casey Foundation

Alaska Head Start Association NEWS

Association Meeting.

The next AHSA meeting is scheduled for June 10-12, in Anchorage at the RurAL CAP offices. The meeting will have affiliate teleconferences the afternoon of the 11th. High on the agenda is completing work for the 501 C-3 application which gives the Association federal non-profit status. Position papers will be drafted in response to the FY 2000 Legislative actions. The Association will also report on the salary and benefit survey for Alaska Head Start Programs. They will be planning for the Region X conference - just nine months away. Please make plans to attend the Anchorage meeting if possible, or to attend committee meetings via teleconference.

The Head Start Collaboration Week in conjunction with the Alaska Head Start Association was held February 15-19 in Juneau. Training and technical assistance were provided by personnel from: state departments, the Quality Center, Alaska Head Start Collaboration Office, Tlingit and Haida Head Start, and the Association of Alaska School Boards. Topics included: Head Start, Denali KidCare, the Alaska Child Health Plan, Early Years/Critical Years Conference on brain development, The Alaska Plan - where we are now with Head Start and where we are going next. Association members met with their legislators, toured the capitol, were introduced on the Senate Floor, and received a citation honoring Head Start in Alaska. A Head Start reception was held mid-week and a Head Start teacher received a citation from the U.S. Coast Guard for helping to save the life of a Russian sailor who was shipwrecked and stranded in icy Alaskan waters.

Head Start Encourages Elder/Child Interaction.

Tanana Chiefs Conference Head Start Program encourages families to keep and strengthen their connections with elders. In Huslia and Koyukuk, home visits have been held at elders' homes or an elder has accompanied the Head Start Educator on home visits to share knowledge about traditional parenting, stories, songs and customs, and to teach the Koyukon Language. In Nulato, Grandma Pauline Peter shared the story "How Lynx Became Lynx". In Tanana, Head Start parents held a covered dish gathering to honor the grandparents, and the children made posters with photos to give them. Holy Cross children had been visiting elders, but there are too many now for them to fit into the elders' homes, so parents and staff are working on ways to help elders visit the classroom each week. Tanana and Nulato Head Starts have Foster Grandparents who are working with their programs. These activities are part of the Community Legacies curriculum developed by Tanana Chiefs Head Start. The curriculum is designed to support and pass the legacy of traditional culture to Head Start children and to meet the intent of Head Start Standards to provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition.

Alaska Head Start Association Meeting Updates - Conference 2000.

The Region X conference will be held in Anchorage at the Captain Cook during the first week of March, 2000. The theme for the conference, "Celebrating the Past, Creating the Future" has been approved by the Region X Board. The training committee met in February and April via teleconference (they report a very small attendance at the April meeting - more help is needed!!)

Decisions about keynote speakers, funding, travel, and a conference chair person need to be made.

The Gift of a Child — Kellee and Dad.

Alaska's
Children

Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project
Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs
P.O. Box 112100
Juneau, Alaska 99811-2100

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National Child Advocate Award for Governor Knowles

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) presented its Special Child Advocate of the Year Award to Governor Tony Knowles on February 25, during the League's national conference in Washington, D.C. David S. Liederman, CWLA's executive director stated, "Every year at our national conference, CWLA honors members of Congress and one governor who has done extraordinary work. We selected Governor Knowles to receive this year's Special Child Advocate Award based on his proven commitment to Alaska's children. Mr. Liederman cited Knowles' appointment of a Children's Cabinet, his support for the Alaska Children's Trust and his Smart Start Initiative, a package of programs and services aimed at combating child abuse and neglect in Alaska. "These are the things we think governors need to do and Governor Knowles stepped up to the plate," Liederman said. "We appreciate it and we are going to say thank you."

At the conference ceremony, Governor Knowles said, "I'm honored to be named to receive this award, and I will accept it on behalf of all those who work for the betterment of Alaska's Children. Parents, educators, caregivers, policymakers and others who are committed to children understand that the things we do today ensure a better Alaska tomorrow.

Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development • Quarterly Report • Sept. 1999

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Alaska's Children

The Developing Child

Part II – Stepping into Public School

This August children throughout Alaska stepped across the threshold of the "big school" into their kindergarten classrooms. For most children and their families, kindergarten is a big step. It marks the beginning of formal schooling, and a change from the familiar experiences of homes, preschools, Head Start and child care environments. Historically, kindergarten was structured as a year of preparation for formal schooling, designed to support children's social and emotional adjustment to group learning and the academic activities in public school. First, second and third grades were viewed as the years when "real learning" began for children. Today, our expectations for kindergarten and primary classrooms have changed for a number of reasons.

■ **More children are enrolled in early care and education programs prior to entering kindergarten.** Recent estimates indicate that about 68% of 3-year-olds, 78% of 4-year-olds and 84% of 5-year-olds are enrolled in early care and education programs outside the home. Consequently, there is a growing belief that today's children are already receiving experiences that support their social, emotional and cognitive development. The role previously

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The Alaska Head Start State Collaboration Project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
For more information, contact the Alaska Head Start Office at (907) 465-4860.
Project Director–Marilyn Webb; Newsletter Editor–Dorothy Douglas

Developing Child, *continued*

assigned to kindergartens – preparation for public school – is now seen as the responsibility of families, child care, preschools and child/family programs like Head Start. Children are expected to enter public school "ready to learn."

■ **Our public school programs are undergoing a period of critical examination**. Critics of our educational systems site test scores such as the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that showed:

- 62% of fourth-graders and 77% of twelfth-graders scored at the "basic" level of literacy,
- Only 31% of fourth-graders and 46% of twelfth-graders scored at the "proficient" level,
- the "advanced" literacy level was attained by 7% of fourth-graders and 6% of twelfth-graders,
- no significant changes were observed for fourth-graders between the 1994 and 1998 NAEP test scores.

Some educators, however, argue that American students are doing better than ever before and compare favorably with other industrialized countries. In 1996, for example, American fourth-graders were in second place and eighth-graders in eighth place on an international comparison with 31 nations. Despite the differing opinions about the literacy achievements of American children, most educators and policymakers agree that today's children will need advanced verbal reasoning and problem-solving skills in order to compete for middle-class jobs in today's information age society. They must be able to use basic literacy skills, as well as higher order critical-thinking skills to analyze, compare and contrast, follow the sequence of an argument and synthesize complex text. In other words, schools are now expected to educate all students to levels of proficiency that, historically, only 25% of students attained.

■ **There is a nationwide movement to "reform" public education systems to achieve new educational outcomes.** Many states are requiring schools to accelerate programs by moving the curricula downward from the upper grades to lower grades, develop standards, assessments and focus classroom activities on student academic performance during the primary school years. Additionally, the academic focus is becoming more specialized. A body of research about school success supports the theory that if children have not acquired critical reading skills by the end of third grade; they are at risk for future academic failure. Consequently, a nationwide goal that all children will become independent readers by the end of third grade has been mandated. *Learning to read*, has become a top priority during the early primary school years.

■ **The moral, social and emotional development of children is a growing concern**. Along with home and community environments, schools are felt to be important settings where children should learn appropriate social behaviors. As the incidents of aggressive even criminal behavior, substance abuse and school violence are showing up among younger age children, we look more often at elementary schools as a means of solving our problems. In those cases where families and communities are unwilling or unable to support the social/emotional development of children, schools are expected to correct problem behaviors.

■ **Current research and discoveries about early brain growth and development have provided new insights about successful learning environments for children**. This research about brain growth and early development lends scientific support to the existing knowledge and practices in the field of early childhood education. Longitudinal studies about school success show children who have attended high quality, developmentally appropriate early care and education programs score higher on standardized tests for cognitive, language and social/emotional development. Research also shows that shifting academic curricula from the upper grades to the lower grades in ways that are inappropriate for children does not contribute to sustained learning over time. A growing number of parents, educators, policy makers and others now expect early care and education programs and primary age classrooms to be based on the essential principles and practices of early childhood education.

Each of these expectations has sparked heated debates about the design, direction and priorities for today's primary age classrooms. One group is demanding academic excellence, another group wants developmentally appropriate teaching practices. But, decisions about school practices do not have to be an "either A or B" choice. Decisions, rather, can be made from many sources of information. Learning environments can build on a child's early learning experiences **and** have high academic standards **and** support a child's social/emotional development **and** use the wealth of information about child development to inform appropriate classroom practices. This kind of learning environment is built on the principles and practices of early childhood education. At the center of this environment is the child. Surrounding the child are the key elements of an early childhood program – rather like pieces of a puzzle that fit together to create a comprehensive picture of school success.

Children use concrete materials to explore complex subjects, like counting and prediction.

Building the Puzzle Around Early Childhood Education

Early childhood programs include both what happens before children go to public school and what happens after they get there. Early childhood embraces a comprehensive vision of support for children from birth through age 8 and includes prenatal growth and development considerations. This vision calls for establishing quality early childhood programs serving children birth through age 4 and establishing quality early childhood programs in kindergarten through, at a minimum, grade 3. Establishing an early childhood unit would provide a structure for parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers to promote the health, develop-

ment and learning of all children at all stages of development. It would also provide much needed continuity between public schools and early care and education programs.

The importance of continuity is clearly demonstrated in a number of current studies about early childhood programs. For example, the National Institute of Health recently published a study about early care. The study shows that children who attended child care centers that met professional early childhood standards scored higher on school readiness, language comprehension and have fewer behavioral problems than their peers. Longitudinal studies of Head Start programs and other high quality preschool programs also show that children score higher on cognitive, social-emotional and school readiness assessments. Children who are able to attend high quality early care and education programs and attend public school classes that also exhibit quality early childhood program standards, show sustained academic success though their formal schooling and fewer social/emotional problems later in their adult life. Conversely, studies show that a high percentage of children who have attended quality early care programs, and then do not attend quality early childhood programs in public school are not able to sustain academic and social/emotional gains. This "fade out effect," which occurs around the fourth grade for some children, was seen at first as a failure of preschools, Head Start and early care programs; but now is seen more accurately as the lack of appropriate learning environments in a child's continuing education experiences.

Establishing an early childhood unit in public schools would supply the missing element in the debates about the curriculum, practices and priorities in the primary grades – a focus on how children learn and develop. This new focus will require changes – setting new expectations for parents and families, students and schools, teachers, policy makers and administrators.

A Key Puzzle Piece - Early Childhood Development and Appropriate Practices

The most successful learning environments for children are those that **are "developmentally appropriate," that is, based on the knowledge of the typical development of children within a particular age range and that take into account the individual differences of each child.** In making decisions about developmentally appropriate primary classrooms, it is essential to understand the development that typically occurs during early childhood.

In an early childhood program, children have access to a variety of learning activities.

Current research about brain growth and development, combined with decades of knowledge and practice from the field of early childhood development, has produced a wealth of information about child development. We know that at birth the human brain is remarkably unfinished, only those parts of the brain that are necessary for survival are functioning. During the first three years of life, the brain will develop the neurological foundations for hearing and oral language, motor development, memory and reason, social attachments, emotional response, cognitive functioning and sensory perceptions such as taste, smell and touch. Each of the foundations sets the stage for future learning and complex activities. Throughout the first decade of life, the brain will continue to create and organize itself in an orderly and predicable sequence, from the simple to the complex. The brain's greatest growth, neuroscientists have confirmed, draws to a close around the age of ten. During this critical period of development, the daily experiences - both positive and negative – that children receive from their environment guide and stimulate growth and development. When children receive the right experiences at the right time, development occurs in an orderly and predictable sequence. Part I of this newsletter series (*Alaska's Children*, Spring 1999) described the typical development that occurs during the first five years of a child's life. This issue addresses the typical development that occurs in children age 5 through 8.

Physical Development. Between the age of 6 and 9, the rate of children's physical growth is slower than the first 5 years. Children will grow 2 to 3 inches and typically gain 3 to 5 pounds. The brain has reached almost its adult size and becomes more efficient in its functioning. Children develop greater control of their movements and excel at running, jumping and sequence movements like somersaults. Their reaction time improves making them much more competent at skills like throwing and catching a ball. These refined skills combined with more sophisticated cognitive and social understanding enables them to engage in games with rules and to cooperate with other players. At the same time, they are very sensitive to comparisons and losing is particularly difficult for primary age children.

Children will also begin to refine their fine motor skills and are capable of more detailed work than preschoolers. As primary age children gain greater control over their

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Developing Child, *continued*

bodies, they can sit for longer periods of time and attend to activities such as writing or drawing – activities that are often very tiring for younger age children. However, primary age children are far from being physically mature and still need to be active. If primary age children are required to sit for long periods of time, they will become more tired than they would out on a playground. Children need physical activity to help develop their motor skills and coordination. Physical activity is also essential for cognitive development. Primary age children are active learners and depend on first hand experiences to help them understand abstract ideas. For example, if children have the opportunity to play with sand – the word will have meaning and context when it is read and written.

Cognitive Development. Children in the primary grades make great strides in cognitive development. This growth affects not only their academic work, but other developmental areas – language development, moral reasoning and self-esteem. Between the age of 5 and 7, most children begin to acquire the ability to think about and solve a wide range of problems. They are increasingly able to understand the viewpoint of others, focus on several aspects of a problem at one time, and reverse their thinking – mentally go through a series of steps and then reverse them or understand that one operation can undo another. The primary grade child shows progress in understanding complex concepts like number and time. While they can symbolically or mentally manipulate concrete concepts, it will be some time before they can mentally manipulate abstract ideas such as dates in history.

Most research in the field of child development attributes children's improved ability to solve problems to their increased body of knowledge, their ability to retrieve information from memory and connect new experiences and activities with their previous experiences. These research findings support developmentally appropriate practices like long-term projects that enable children to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of a topic rather than merely covering every topic of study quickly and shallowly.

Language and Literacy. Closely tied to cognitive development are changes in children's language and communication ability. The explosion of language during the preschool years is followed by a dramatic transition during the primary grades, the movement from oral language to written language – reading and writing. Of all the domains of child development, more research and study has been devoted to the process of acquiring oral language and learning to read and write.

The current research on brain development has also added a new chapter to what is known about the literacy development of children. Children do not learn to read and write just because they are receiving reading instruction in the first grade. Learning to read is a process that begins at birth when children begin to acquire oral language skills. When newborns tune in to the voice of their parents, the brain receives the necessary stimulus to build dedicated circuits for the phonemic structure of language. From this phonemic structure, children learn and recognize syllables and then begin connecting syllables into words. By the age of 12 months, a child is capable of acquiring one new word every two hours. Around this same age children begin stringing single words into simple two word sentences and begin demonstrating a real interest in books. They will also discover that crayons make interesting marks on paper. From 24 to 36 months, a preschooler is capable of constructing more complex sentences, telling stories and using languages in creative ways. Between the age of 3 and 5 years, children begin to discover "real" concepts about written language. By age five, children can master the skills commonly known as reading readiness skills: knowledge of colors and shapes, familiarity with the alphabet, the ability to read a few common words, signs, labels and write a few letters. Children are now ready to make a very important discovery about language – that in addition to meaning, letters and letter combinations also carry sound. This ability to integrate oral language (sounds) with written language (print) is critical if children are to become competent readers and writers. It is one of the best predictors of success in becoming literate.

Social/Emotional. The cognitive shift that occurs at about age 7 also has important implications for children's social and emotional development. As their reasoning improves and their ability to understand multiple perspectives increases, children become better able to think about and reflect the rules of behavior and to understand right and wrong. Children also become aware that another person can have different thoughts than their own. Not only do children gain understanding and respect for their peer's opinions; they also gain new insights into their own self-concept. School-agers typically form at least three images of themselves: their perceptions of their academic, social and physical competence. By age 8, these images combine into a generalized image of self that children can verbalize – whether they like themselves and how much. During the primary-grade years, children's self-esteem (estimation of self-worth, pride or shame in their competence) becomes more realistic and accurate. Experiences that shape self-concept and self-esteem are especially important during the early school years because children's self-esteem influences their

This non-competitive game helps students learn how to share, take turns and respect other's ideas.

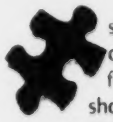
behavior. As children get older, their self-concept becomes more difficult to change. For example, if children have a negative image of themselves as readers, they generally exert less effort in school. In a social context, children with a negative self-concept are likely to be more aggressive and disliked by peers, further lowering their self-esteem. A large body of research provides powerful evidence that children who fail to develop minimal social competence and experience rejection or neglect by their peers at a young age, are at significant risk of dropping out of school, becoming delinquent and experiencing mental health problems in adulthood.

In an early childhood program, the curriculum and practices would be in tune with the developmental characteristics of the individual child. Children would select from among activities the teacher has prepared and those initiated by the children themselves. They would spend most of their time working individually or in small groups and would be allowed to move at their own pace to acquire important skills. Because children will be at different levels of development, the classroom would contain materials and activities for a wide range of developmental interests and abilities. Teachers would understand that learning for young children does not occur in narrowly defined subject areas. Rather, skills and knowledge such as reading and mathematics would be integrated into a variety of activities such as dramatic play, art, music, science and social studies projects. The classroom arrangement would encourage interaction among children and include fewer worksheets and more concrete materials for children to explore and use to solve problems. A developmentally appropriate curriculum would accommodate the growing child by providing more complex materials and activities as the child moves through the primary grades. The teacher would be well trained in child development and skilled in both the observation of children and the ability to interact with children in ways that extend their thinking. The teacher would have time and support during the day to implement an appropriate program.

The learning experiences children have had prior to their entry into public school are also an important consideration in early childhood programs. All children enter public school with a unique history of early learning and care. Public schools will be receiving graduates from every form of early care and education programs: homes, Head Start, family child care, profit and non-profit preschools, center-based child care, church based programs and others. The quality of care and early learning experiences children have received will directly influence their development and progress in public school. Some children will have had rich experiences with books, music, art, group learning activities, and will have developed positive relationships with their peers, parents, caregivers and teachers. As a result of these experiences they may be able to recognize letters and numbers and pick out words in books when they come to public school. Some children may have had very chaotic experiences: abusive homes, foster care, or out-of-home care where the main activity has been watching videos. Their early care and education experiences will have left them ill prepared for not only the social and emotional demands of formal schooling, but with limited academic preparation. Most children will fall somewhere in between these two developmental extremes. Many public schools do not have a system for learning about these early learning experiences or an active plan to help smooth the transition for children from early care and education programs into public school. Even fewer public schools attempt to improve the quality of care and education children are receiving prior to entry into the primary grades, or acknowledge the benefits to be gained from promoting high quality early care and education as a major factor in school success.

The education of young children is a shared responsibility of families, teachers, school administrators, elected officials and community members. In an early childhood program, each of these partners plays a key role in shaping the health, academic and social/emotional development of children – each is an important piece of the puzzle.

Who Are Our Teachers?



Among the most critical issues to be considered in early childhood programs are the qualifications of its teachers. Research shows that the most effective programs for young children have staff who have received specialized training in early childhood/child development. Public schools usually hire teachers with qualifications based on, or required by, state teacher certification systems. In many states, teacher certification criteria were established years ago and may not reflect the existing knowledge base about young children. As a result, approximately half of the states do not require early childhood education or training for certified elementary school teachers. In Alaska, teachers are not required to have early childhood education or training to teach in the primary grades. The State, rather, looks to local school districts to establish their own specific hiring standards. Districts may or may not require teachers to have specific education and training in early childhood development.

The most consistent recommendation generated by years of study and research in the early childhood field is that teachers should have professional training and education in early childhood education and be able to demonstrate professional understanding, knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes in:

Child growth, development and learning.

- Physical development including variable growth and behavioral patterns during specific ages and stages of development,
- Cognitive development and the relation of early experiences to individual differences in child's development,
- Receptive and expressive communications, speech, language development,
- Emotional, social, moral development and establishing self-esteem,
- Integration of active involvement in learning activities,
- Biological and environmental factors that promote child wellness,
- Recognition of signs of emotional distress, abuse and neglect,
- Observation and recording of children's behavior and conducting meaningful screening tests.

Family and community relations

- Understanding vital role of the family and community in early care and education,
- The ability to cooperate with families and communities to build upon a child's cultural and family background,
- Implementing teaching and learning activities that include families in child's learning both at home and in the school setting.

Curriculum Development, content and implementation

Understanding, planning for and facilitating a child's learning in content areas of language, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health and safety.

Health, Safety and Nutrition

- Understanding and managing environments that provide for the health, safety and nutritional well-

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Developing Child, *continued*

being of children,

- Understanding and identifying conditions that warrant referral of the child or family to community resources for services like housing, healthcare and family wellness.

Professional Development

- Understanding the importance of continued professional training and development,
- Working with other specialties within the field such as special needs, different age groupings, family services; and working with diverse socio-economic and cultural groups to gain a broader knowledge about the factors that affect child development.

Policy Makers/ Administrators as Leaders

Principals, school superintendents, school board members and policy makers at both the local and state level are key players in establishing early childhood programs. It is primarily these people who set the standard of excellence for schools. For example, in Alaska, the State Board of Education adopts teacher licensure standards that are then implemented through state regulations. If the State Board adopted regulations requiring primary grade teachers to meet national standards for early childhood education, both the schools and teacher preparation programs would respond to that mandate. Schools would be obligated to hire trained early childhood teachers and university teacher preparation programs would plan appropriate coursework and degree programs. Other decisions by state and local policy makers are crucial for providing funding, resources and leadership for schools. Legislators can vote for funding that would establish early childhood units both in and out of public school systems. Principals can establish parent involvement programs and support continued training and education opportunities for their teachers. As leaders in early childhood programs, policy makers, administrators and others should have:

- Specialized training in early childhood education and child development in order to gain understanding of the importance and need for quality early childhood programs,
- The ability to work with families, communities to promote effective programs,
- A strong commitment to develop and implement policies within schools, communities and the state that encourage or require hiring primary grade teachers with professional competencies in early childhood education,
- Resources to support and provide continuing education opportunities and systems for teachers to form partnerships with other teachers, families and programs,
- A willingness to advocate for quality early care and learning programs from birth through age 8.

From the Beginning - Parents and Families

A key piece of high quality early childhood programs is the involvement of parents and families in all aspects of their children's development. Beginning before birth, parents are responsible for the health and well-being of children and for providing critical learning experiences during the infant, toddler and preschool years. The parent's continued influence and active participation in their child's education is critical for long term school success. In a high-quality early childhood program parent/family involvement is recognized as a two-part responsibility. One part is the parent's responsibility to support their child at home, in school and in the community. The other part is the school's responsibility to recognize parents as partners and to create necessary supports and opportunities for parents to be involved in public school.

The first 3 years of life sets the stage for future learning and complex activities.

Parents who are active partners in their child's public school experience would:

- Be knowledgeable about child development and early childhood education practices and principles.
- Support their child's learning
  - at home through good nutrition, health care, adequate sleep, extending school activities by reading with their child, helping with homework, limiting TV/ video time,
  - at school by setting aside time to volunteer in the classroom, attending parent meetings, meeting with teachers and other school officials,
  - in the community by staying informed about school issues, supporting school funding, and policy development,
- Work directly with schools to develop parent involvement opportunities, parent education programs, early childhood education opportunities,
- Have family resources like a good education, jobs that pay well, health insurance, and safe housing that enable them to provide stable environments for their children.

Schools and communities would support parent involvement by:

- Providing specific training and supports to teachers on parent involvement,
- Including parents in decisionmaking about school policies and programs,
- Requiring teachers to create opportunities for parents to volunteer and assist with classroom activities and extend school activities into the home,
- Promoting an environment where parents are valued and respected as partners in the child's education,
- Promoting and planning for opportunities where parents and teachers/ administrators can exchange

information about children, school programs and policies,

- Working with parents and early care/education programs to ease a child's transition into public school,
- Ensuring that family support programs and resources are available in the community and the school that will meet the diverse needs of families,
- Supporting parents by working with businesses and employers to develop family friendly workplaces.

Students and Schools – Measuring our Progress

The nationwide emphasis on school reform and student academic performance has pushed almost every state to develop some method of describing what children should learn in each grade and to devise some way of holding schools accountable for student performance. States have developed *Standards* - broad statements that describe what students should know and be able to do that is appropriate for their age; and *Assessments* – methods to document and assess the student's and the school's performance.

Standards, in most cases, do provide a set of guidelines and quality indicators for programs. In 1993, Alaska began to develop content standards for Alaska's students. These standards were broad statements of what our students should know and be able to do in ten core content areas – English/language arts, math, science, geography, government, citizenship, history, skills for healthy life, world language and technology. Work on the standards has continued through the Alaska Quality Schools Initiative. The Initiative is a campaign to bring measurable students standards and assessments to Alaska's public schools. Using the core information from the Content Standards, measurable Performance Standards are being developed for each of the content areas. Performance Standards have been completed for reading, math and writing for age groupings 5-7, 8-10, 11-14 and 15-18. Assessments are in the process of being developed for these performance standards. Students will be assessed during their third grade year, their eighth grade year and their senior year in high school through a high school qualifying exam. (Copies of the Alaska Standards are available at schools and through Standards, Department of Education and Early Development, 801 W. Tenth Street, Juneau, Alaska, 99801; or call 907-465-2800.)

In addition to the state's Content/Performance Standards and Assessments, Alaska has also developed a Kindergarten Developmental Profile. The profile will collect information about each child when they enter kindergarten or first grade in four developmental domains: physical well-being and motor development, language and literacy development, personal-social development, thinking and cognitive development. The profile also provides schools with a mechanism to collect child health information. The 1999/2000 school year will be the first time all schools will be required to collect this information.

Student standards, profiles and tests are necessary tools to document school performance and to inform parents and the public about the results of educational programs. But, if standards and assessments are inappropriate, or are used for things like student placement or teaching-to-the-test practices, then they will be meaningless. For example, children in the primary grades are not experienced test takers and issuing a pencil and paper test to third graders that requires hours of sustained effort will not provide valid results. Appropriate standards and assessments for the primary grades must reflect the developmental progress of each child and the developmental principles of the early childhood curriculum. More specifically, appropriate standards and assessments for the primary grades are those where:

- The primary purpose is to improve services for children and ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences,
- Assessment is through observation and recording of a child's developmental progress, not through standardized tests. Periodic samples of writing and drawings, oral tapes of reading, videotapes or observations of social interaction and problem solving used as samples to develop a portfolio for each child; the portfolio is used to adapt the curriculum for each child and to inform parents about his/her child's progress,
- Assessments are not used to determine placement in groups or grades,
- Assessments must not convey a sense of failure to the child or their family,
- Teachers and administrators must have adequate training and time to observe and conduct appropriate assessments.

Beyond the Classroom – The Final Puzzle Piece

High quality early childhood programs support more than just the learning that occurs in a classroom. They support the overall well-being of children and their families. Early childhood programs are comprehensive and include all of the factors that affect children's learning, including:

- Health screenings and medical follow-ups to ensure physical, dental, nutritional, and mental health, because children simply cannot learn if they are in ill health or hungry,
- Family wellness screenings to ensure that families have access to needed programs or services, because children learn hopelessness if they are homeless or live in chaotic homes,
- High quality community early childhood programs, because children are learning all the time – during their infant/toddler and preschool years and before and after school when parents are working,
- State and federal support for the well-being of children, because children learn less in under-staffed, underfunded child care facilities, preschools, Head Start Programs, and schools,
- Parent training, education and support because children are more successful when their parents are gainfully employed, have positive parenting skills and are involved in all aspects of children's learning,
- At the heart of any program, is the child – what we know about the child and what is the best situation that can be created for the child's well-being.

Photos courtesy of Ms. Montoya's Kindergarten Classroom, Harborview Elementary School, Juneau, Alaska.

***Information Sources**: Right From the Start, The Report of the NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education; Early Childhood Education and the Elementary School Principal, National Association of Elementary School Principals; Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, National Association for the Education of Young Children; Learning to Read and Write, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory; Standards for Alaska Students, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; A Parents Guide to Early Childhood Education, Teaching Strategies, Inc; Early Childhood Teacher Certification, National Association for the Education of Young Children Position Paper; Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study, 1993-1998, Universities of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Colorado, California at Los Angeles, and Yale; Child Outcomes When Child Care Center Classes Meet Recommended Standards for Quality, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.*

COLLABORATION

B•R•I•E•F•I•N•G•S

The Alaska Children's Trust FY2000 Grant Awards

Each year, the Alaska Children's Trust (ACT) awards grants to community based programs that prevent child abuse and neglect. The grants are funded by the annual interest earned from the corpus of ACT fund. This year's grants will fund 15 projects throughout the state. Following is a brief summary of the grants:

Project: Muldoon Area Family Center, Anchorage Center for Families

The Center will provide counseling and crisis intervention services, form links with public schools and public safety agencies to coordinate prevention efforts, provide referral services to individuals and provide community education services and advocacy services for families in the Muldoon area of Anchorage.

Project: Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Campaign, Alaska Public Radio Network

The APRN will produce and distribute public service announcements to parents, extended families, and the general public, focusing on the importance of meeting children's basic developmental needs through effective parenting and living in a supportive community. Over the project year, 156 PSA's will be broadcast by satellite reaching 100,000 listeners in 330 communities throughout Alaska.

Project: SMART Girls Program, Boys and Girls Clubs of Anchorage

The project will expand an Anchorage peer counseling and mentoring program to Eagle River. The 40-week program will provide information, activities and special events for young girls to promote healthy lifestyles.

Project: Project "Nurture," Covenant House, Anchorage

Chosen for a second year of funding, Project Nurture supports single parenting mothers ages 16 to 20 who have graduated from the Covenant House program and are living on their own. The ACT grant funding supports continued contact and support for these young parents through home visits and other supports. The successes of the past year's project include: 100% employment, with at least 50% employed at the vocational level two years after graduation; 0% unplanned second pregnancies; 0% child abuse and neglect.

Project: Community Parenting Project, Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Inc., Sand Point.

Parenting classes and support networks will be provided to parents with children age birth to five in the Eastern Aleutian region. The services will supplement the current crisis intervention and referral components of medical and behavioral health care and includes the addition of parenting classes, support groups, and home visits.

Project: Supported Parenting, Fairbanks Resource Agency.

Supported Parenting is a hands-on parent education program designed for parents with developmental and learning disabilities, and for family crisis/dysfunction. The ACT grant added home-based parent support and education services to keep children safe and healthy.

Project: Early Intervention "Child's Play", Frontier Community Services, Kenai Peninsula.

Home visits, child and family playgroups, parent mentoring and community awareness will be provided to families with children age birth to five throughout the Kenai/Soldotna area.

Project: Saxman Youth Breakfast Club, Gateway Center for Human Services.

As a result of the project, a nutritious early morning snack will be available to Saxman youth before school. The children will also be able to interact with trained volunteers and a part-time social worker.

Project: Infant Learning/Parents as Teachers, Homer Children's Services.

The ACT funded portion of this early childhood family education and support program extends home-based services to families whose children, age birth to five who are not experiencing developmental delays. Services will be provided primarily through home visits and will include a center-based playgroup. The project will support parenting and nurturing skills among all family members and a better understanding of their children's development.

Project: Child and Family Advocacy Project, Matanuska-Susitna School District.

This project is a joint effort between the school district, the Sutton Elementary School, parents and community agencies. A home visiting program, peer parent groups and monthly family nights will be provided to families in the Sutton area.

Youth Empowered Serve – YES, Nome Community Center.

This program will organize and support the YES Youth Council. The Council will establish task and interest groups to address the needs and causes of child abuse and neglect.

Project: Parent Outreach Project – Year Three, Fairbanks Resource Center for Children and Families.

A third year of funding has been granted for this project which will recruit, train and support 10 new parent outreach specialists and implement parent outreach programs in 6 previously unserved communities in the northern region.

Project: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program, St. George Traditional Council.

This project addresses child abuse and neglect by developing a long-range program based on the Aleut cultural, spiritual and social norms and the values of the community. A community assessment will be completed and a demographic profile will identify children who may be "at risk" for abuse and neglect. A comprehensive long-term prevention program for St. George will be implemented and monitored.

Project: Strengthening of Grandfamilies, Volunteers of America, Anchorage.

A second year of funding will continue to provide services to families parented by grandparents. These services will include respite care through a summer camp for 30 children who are being raised by their grandparents, a winter family camp and 10 one-hour training/education presentations for No Empty Nest meetings as well as newsletter and office support.

Project: Parent Education and Support Services, Wrangell Community Services.

The goal of this project is to strengthen families by focusing on educational and emotional needs through support for families as they grow and change. Services will include parent education classes designed to teach parenting skills, child development and child health, informational material and resources, parent support groups for parents to share experiences, ask questions and improve their parenting skills.

Project: Mentoring our Future Leaders, Yupiit School District, Tuluksak.

This community-initiated project will help prevent child abuse and neglect by building trust among parents, community members, and children. A group of adult volunteers from the village will become mentors for young people. The volunteers will receive training and each student and mentor will work together on goals the student has set for him/herself. Mentors and students will meet regularly in a large group and will take part in two spirit camp activities. An Advisory Board made up of 90% of the community will meet quarterly to help direct the project.

For more information about the Children's Trust Grants and other activities, contact Shari Paul @ 907-465 4870.

Calendar of Events

October 3-9 Washington, DC	*Early Head Start, Infant & Toddler Meeting*	415-331-5277
October 7-8 Washington, D.C.	*TAG Maternal Child Health Mtg.*	
October 14 Teleconference	*Alaska Head Start Association Board Meeting @ 12:00 noon*	Sharon Trish
October 18-23 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	*Alaska Federation of Natives Youth/ Elders Conference*	
October 19-20 Anchorage, AK	*State Home Visiting Quarterly Meeting*	
October 21 in Anchorage & **October 25** in Bethel, AK	*Head Start Quality Center "Creative Curriculum"*	907-272-6925
November 4-6 Anchorage or Homer	*Alaska Head Start Association Board/Membership Meeting*	
November 11-13 Hilton, Anchorage, AK	*Pathways Annual Conference*	
November 13 New Orleans, LA	*National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Meeting*	800-424-2460
December 3-5 Anaheim, CA	*Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers & Families, 14th Annual Institute*	703-271-1296
January 12-14 Washington, D.C	*Collaboration Network Meeting*	
January 31-February 1 Anchorage, AK	*Native Educators Conference*	
March 2000 Anchorage, AK	*Region X Head Start Conference*	

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Alaska Head Start Association NEWS

■ Head Start 2000 — Celebrating the Past, Creating the Future

Mark your calendars now and begin your plans to attend the Region X Head Start Training Conference to be held March 1-3, 2000 in Anchorage at the Captain Cook Hotel. The keynote speaker, Elisabeth Schorr, was approved at the August Region X Head Start Association Board Meeting. The date for "call-for-papers" for the conference was extended to August 20, 1999. In a true Head Start and Alaska tradition, the conference will be a collaborative planning and presentation effort between Region X and AIPB Head Start. For more information about the conference and how each Head Start program can help make this our best effort, contact Pam Gingue, Director Upper Tanana Head Start – phone 907-883-5159 or e-mail: utdc@ptialaska.net

■ Alaska Head Start Association Meeting Minutes

June 10-12, 1999 Anchorage.

Alaska Work Group Strategic Planning Committee. A copy of the final plan still has not been received from AIPB for distribution. Issues to be resolved include what are the results of the plan and what can be done to facilitate and support it implementation. The group would also like to see the work that was done at the Juneau meeting. Sarah Kuenzli and Brent Cappell will contact Prevention Associates for that information. A letter will be sent to Helen Taylor, ACYF Associate Commissioner to request a copy of the report. A MOA between Head Start State Office, Region X and AIPB needs to be developed. Sharon Trish and Sarah Kuenzli will work on this task. Another idea is to have AFN and various tribes request the information also. Prevention Associates provided copies of the Juneau discussion on the Strategic Plan.

AHSA Historian. Laurel Young is interested in taking on this position and developing AHSA archives, scrapbook and format for recording of the Association.

FY 2000 Region X Conference. Plans to help AHSA members attend the conference was discussed. It is possible that some of the AHSA savings could be used for members. An incentive to boost membership such as a drawing for a prize for people who become members during the conference was discussed. Keynote speakers for the conference have been recommended and forwarded to the training Committee. Call for papers will be out soon. The keynote speaker recommendation is Elisabeth Shore or Jules Sugarman. Closing speaker recommendations are: Scott Liebierer or Derek Peterson. Goals have been updated and assignments made for specific tasks. Preconference days are still being developed and there may be a director track. The board is reviewing if they can offer CEU's at the conference and the possibility of an awards banquet/recognition as a big part of the event. Many applications have been submitted for awards. The next training committee meeting is August 16. Cari Olmstead will be present. Barney Edwards and Shirley Pittz are willing to make items for a silent auction during the Conference.

Membership in the AHSA. The Board discussed how to increase membership and set goals for each affiliate. The Parent Affiliate goal for 2000 is 1200; Friends Affiliate goal is 1000; Staff Affiliate goal is 300; Director Affiliate goal is 100%. There are currently 218 members in the AHSA. A welcome letter that will be given to each person who joins was discussed.

State Funding and Other Budget Issues. The Department of Community and Regional Affairs has been dissolved and Head Start will become of the Department of Education – now called the Department of Education and Early Development (EED). Some of Head Start's state funding (40%) has supplanted (replaced) by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) federal funds. These funds have specific restrictions and are limited. Currently no long-range funding plan has been developed by the legislature for Head Start and other programs to replace state funds when the TANF funds have been spent.

The AHSA needs to send a letter to Commissioner Cross, Marilyn Webb, the Governor, Yvonne Chase and legislative leaders about Head Start's change to EED. The letter would ask for an explanation of the change, status updates and how this will affect Head Start agencies, what is the message they are sending us, why was this done, what/where are the gains, and why Head Start was not involved in the process - no public hearings? The Association needs to develop a message of advocacy and get it out to everyone. The letter will be copied to all Head Start grantees. In addition AHSA needs to know what the restrictions are on TANF funding, the changes in allocated Head Start funds, future funding for Head Start programs and set the expectation that Head Start will play a role in the development of the new EED.

KIDPAC Update. Nancy will research what the AHSA contribution to KIDPAC goes toward and if there are restrictions on how much can be contributed, who represents Head Start on KIDPAC and if there is an end of session wrap-up. A motion was passed to ask KIDPAC for an end of session report.

LOGO Development. Sample logos based on the hands theme and others were distributed. The logo should be meaningful on it own and not require a lengthy explanation. The logos presented did not meet the member's expectations and Anna will hire a graphic artist for assistance. New designs will be presented at the July or August teleconference.

Budget and Resources. The AHSA Certificate of Deposit rolled over on 6/9/99 for another six months. A financial reconciliation will be completed annually by an accountant. Tony and Anna will check with CPA's to see if this can be done affordably. The budget for the year was reviewed and next year's budget discussed. Nancy will let the Association know how much money has been brought in for agency and individual dues. The 501© 3/ 1023 non-profit status application is underway.

■ Committee/Affiliate Updates.

The Bylaws Committee reviewed proposed changes and sent them back to the committee for further development. The Bylaws need to address NIHSDA and Region X representation/affiliation. What role are we playing? How are all our agencies equally represented? The membership year needs to be addressed and how it affects our status with these groups. The committee also needs to decide if Region X dues need to go through AHSA for one payment.

The Staff Affiliate has a wage study that includes Alaska and other states and targets teachers, assistants and directors. Laurels and Linda's terms are ending in October. The staff has proposed giving away door prizes to increase attendance and participation in the next elections.

News, *continued*

The Advocacy and Networking Committee discussed shortening the membership form for people wanting to simply renew their membership. Notice will be sent to all agencies requesting newsletter items for the Alaska's Children newsletter. All one-year advocacy goals were discussed. The committee would like to develop more partnerships statewide and would like to invite more agencies to be present at board meetings. The first group to invite would be the Partners working group. Anna will contact Mia Oxley and invite her to update the Board at the next meeting. Once the logo is complete, the committee would like to print tee shirts and coffee cups. The advocacy packet will be update annually and distribute to members.

The Training Committee met and discussed the award process and screened 26 nominees. Another call is scheduled to choose which nominees to forward on to Region X. A teleconference meeting was held with Cari Olmstead in Portland to discuss the Conference 2000. Issues included space and attendance, the call-for-papers, receiving college credits for the conference, giving AHSA awards at the conference, registration logistics, keynote speakers, and vendor/booths. Committees are assigned tasks and the next call will be in August.

Future Action Items. A discussion was held about child care reimbursements. Currently only parents and not staff are reimbursed for child care. A motion was proposed for AHSA to reimburse the costs of child care for children up to age 13 a maximum of $25 for a full day and $15 for half day child care per child. Reimbursement will be given upon receipt of the invoice from the child care provider. Child care reimbursements will be given to current Board Members, Affiliate Chairs and Committee Chairs for official Board Functions only as requested for child care not normally required on a regular basis. The motion passed and becomes effective 6/9/99. A motion was also passed to amend the one-year goals as revised throughout the meeting.

■ August 12, 1999 Board Meeting, teleconference.

Membership Update. The membership form has been revised proofed and the new-member letter updated. Janet wrote two letters, one to staff encouraging them to join and one to directors encouraging them to have agencies/staff/parents join. The old brochure will also be revised and membership cards to mail out to new members will be developed.

Please turn to page 13

STATUS REPORT

Alaska's Children

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, 1.2 million children are homeless on any given night. More than half of all homeless children are under the age of six. Homeless children have very high rates of acute illness, struggle in school, and suffer mental and emotional problems:

- Nearly 70% of homeless infants, toddlers and preschoolers have chronic illnesses
- More than 60% of homeless school-age children have frequent illnesses
- 1/5 of homeless children do not attend school
- Homeless children have 4 times the rate of developmental delays, double the number of learning disabilities, 3 times as many emotional and behavioral problems.

Source: America's Homeless Children – New Forecasts. A public policy Report from The Better Home Funds.

During Fiscal Year 1999, 3,198 Alaska children and 2,939 families received Head Start Services. The number of children served represent only 22% of the low-income children and their families who are eligible for Head Start Services. Of those children who were enrolled in Head Start

- 12% were diagnosed handicapped
- 88% were fully immunized
- 62% completed medical screenings with 26% needing medical follow-ups
- 66% completed dental screenings with 33% requiring dental follow-up
- 1,668 are enrolled in Medicaid, 567 have no medical insurance.

Source: Alaska Head Start FY99 Stats Alaska Head Start Programs

When children born in poverty are provided with high-quality, active learning preschool experiences, the benefits are significant, both in terms of improved quality of life and in terms of lower costs to society for welfare, grade retention, special education, social services, and crime costs. A sampling of these findings shows:

- One-third more graduated from high school than those who did not attend a quality preschool
- At-risk children who have benefited from a quality early childhood program spend 1.3 less years in some form of special education and are 25% less likely to be retained in grade
- As adults, those who attended a quality preschool program are 3 times more likely to own a home, young women are 1/3 less likely to have out-of-wedlock births and 25% less likely to be a teen mom.
- At-risk children not afforded the opportunity to participate in a quality program are five times more likely to be arrested repeatedly by age 27.

Source: National Head Start Association, Government Affairs Resource Paper: A Cost Benefit Approach to Understanding Why Head Start is the Nation's Pride

Gunshot injuries cost the United States an estimated $2.3 billion in lifetime medical costs in 1994 dollars, or about $17,000 per injury. For hospitalized patients with nonfatal gunshot injuries, the average lifetime cost was $34,420 to $36,685 per person. Government programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, workers compensation, CHAMPUS, and others were the primary payers for 40 to 50% of hospitalized gunshot injury cases.

Source: The Medical Costs of Gunshot Injuries in the United States, Cook, Lawrence, Ludwig, Miller. Journal of the American Medical Association, August 1999.

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A New Direction

By Richard S. Cross
Commissioner of Education & Early Development

When Governor Knowles signed House Bill 40 into law last legislative session, he enacted a public policy of major dimensions. Among other things, the legislation combined early development with the traditional K-12 education system under a single agency: the Department of Education & Early Development (EED).

With the passage of HB 40, EED now has the policy and administrative authority, supported by specific statutes, to create and implement a vision for comprehensive public school, school-readiness and early childhood programs for children of all ages—from birth through high school.

For EED, the new name means assuming new responsibilities, which went into effect on July 1, 1999. Statewide programs for Child Care Assistance, Child Care Programs and Head Start were transferred to EED, along with the employees who work in these programs from the former Department of Community & Regional Affairs. One year from now—on July 1, 2000—the responsibility for licensing child care facilities will transfer to EED from the Department of Health & Social Services.

To appropriately integrate these wide ranging programs for children from birth through high school, we will need to build a vision that takes into account the comprehensive needs of all children for health, nutrition, child care, language, cognitive, academic and career development. This vision will no longer be limited by an artificial age cut-off of five- or six-year-olds—the needs of *all* children will be taken into account.

To make sure this gets done quickly and with care, I have taken a number of immediate actions. I have created a second Deputy Commissioner position in the Department of Education & Early Development. We are fortunate that long-time children's advocate Yvonne Chase has agreed to be Deputy Commissioner of Early Development. She is first person to ever hold this position. She will work with me, Deputy Commissioner of Education Bruce Johnson and the State Board of Education and Early Development to begin building our new vision. Both Yvonne and Bruce have equal standing in EED and together they comprise my key policy team.

Yvonne, Bruce and I will begin working with the State Board of Education September 23, 24 and 25 in Anchorage to begin writing a new mission, goals and work plan for Fiscal Year 2000. We will also discuss new regulatory and statutory needs to implement our vision. I am prepared to ask the State Board to support additional funding to begin expanding services to young children who currently do not receive services. Our vision will be guided by current research on brain and child development, and programs that work, like Head Start.

On July 1, 1999, the date the new department came into being, I took the step to unveil a new Department of Education & Early Development logo. On that day, we even began using our new letterhead with our new name, and changed our email address to reflect our name with the "eed" abbreviation, instead of the old "educ."

We have the new logo and EED materials because symbols speak loudly. They describe who you are, how you view yourself, how you view others, what sort of work you do, and even the quality of your work. The logo appropriately depicts a child's hand reaching for the North Star, for a bright future. The logo displays the full name of our department, which makes it clear that we are working to improve the lives of Alaska's children of all ages. The logo also contains our state colors to show that we are an integral and vital part of Alaska.

We also have these new symbols because I deeply support and believe in the new direction of one department to serve all children of all ages. We will use our new authority to systematically address the needs of young children to give them the best chance possible to arrive at their first day of school healthy and learning. Once in school, we will help them meet high state academic standards, develop healthy life styles and prepare for worthwhile lives.

Alaska's Head Start program has much to contribute to the new statewide vision. I expect the knowledge gained through Head Start's long history of successful programs geared toward the development of young children, including its highly regarded family involvement model, will influence the direction of the Department of Education & Early Development in the months and years ahead.

News, *continued*

Janet will forward the card to Nancy to proof and have printed in Anchorage. To date, eight grantees paid and there are 219 individual members for the 1999 membership year.

Fiscal Update. Dale Daigger, an employee at RurAL CAP is willing to complete the fiscal reconciliation for AHSA. The 501©3 application forms are in the process of completion.

Training Committee. Award nominees have been submitted to the regional office. The call-for-papers will be mailed out again and Shirley will contact Marilyn about another possible speaker.

Advocacy/Networking Committee. Shirley will send information to the advocacy committee concerning school boards talking about formula funding for early childhood programs.

State/National Information. The Board would like to meet with Commissioner Cross about the new Department of Education and Early Development. The Association should be prepared with questions and issues to discuss. Nationally, people should be encourage to write letters regarding the tax cut legislation that would affect Head Start. National issues discussed by Region X were violence on TV. Three representatives from each region will be attending a children's issues conference with recommendations to be sent on to the Surgeon General.

Region X Meeting. The Keynote Speaker at Conference 2000 will be Elizabeth Schorr.

Program Updates. Janet will only be working with Chugachmuit for a few more months. RurAL CAP has new programs, funding sources have given them more home visitors. APIA has a new Head Start director. BBNA has received funding for their Dillingham program.

KIDPAC. The Association's contribution to KIDPAC is used to pay for a lobbyist and teleconference meetings. End of session reports have been sent out, but not last year. The Networking/Advocacy committee would like to work closer with KIDPAC and have a Association member on the board.

Future meetings for the AHSA are:

- September 2 at 12:00 noon teleconference
- October 14 at 12:00 noon teleconference
- November 4-6 in Anchorage or Homer for new and outgoing Board Members

Please mark you calendars and plan on participating in these meetings.

Counting Our Children
Census 2000

— from Tony Vaska, Alaska Head Start Association Co-Chair and Census 2000 Coordinator

Children can be the center of our world. They are the objects of hundreds of photographs, the subject of many conversations, and the recipients of a major share of the family's resources. How could we ever forget the children? In reality, many children are forgotten when we are filling out our census forms. The 1990 census, for example, missed about 4 million people, half of whom were children under the age of 18. Missing children in the census count can lead to real errors in planning services for children. The distribution of federal funds for school districts is based on the census; health agencies use census results to plan and administer programs that promote the well being of families and children. Information on children helps determine funding for special programs, such as the WIC food program for women, infants and children, Head Start, special needs. Census information is also used to plan and budget for our long-term needs such as schools, roads, and public services.

In an effort to improve the upcoming 2000 census, the 1990 numbers were reviewed and information gather about why children are not always included on the household census forms. The primary resasons include:

- Adults who completed the form may not have understood that children should be included. *Each household should list everyone residing in the home at the time the form is completed, including children.*
- The census misses some people because it cannot locate their place of residence. Forms will be delivered to homes just before April 1, 2000. If a home is in a remote location, hidden above a store in the inner city or if families are living in temporary housing, shelters or on the street, many children and adults can be missed. Children's programs can help by ensuring all families receive a census form. *If a family in your program does not receive a census, contact the Census Questionnaire Assistance Center in your area.*
- Children can be missed because no one is sure where they belong. Newborns, children of divorced parents, foster children, or children who are wards of the state are the most often undercounted citizens. The census rules state that newborns or any child in the hospital for care should still be listed on the household's'questionnaire, not at the hospital. A child should be counted at the residence where he or she sleeps most of the time, except in cases where a child attends a boarding school. Foster children are counted where they are living on Census Day. *Everyone living at your address should be included on your census form, even if they are not related to you.*
- As ridiculous as it seems, some children are not listed because previous forms did not provided enough space to list more than six members of a household. *The Census 2000 forms however will ask for the total number of people living in the household with space provided to write the names of each member.*
- Many children are missed because adults don't want to participate in the census. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share your answers with the IRS, FBI, Welfare, Immigration or any other government or non-government agency. No court of law can find your answers. *Your information is kept private and safe.*

Alaska's Children

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Telephone 907-465-4860; Fax 907-465-8638

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